



Business Situation Summary

Nepean Community College (NCC) is an adult education institution focused on equipping minorities, the disadvantaged, and the disabled with digital skills necessary to function successfully in today's digital world. The college needed its end-user devices to keep up with an increasingly diverse student demographic, a growing catalog of classes, as well as increased enrolment.

Solution Summary

NCC deployed Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition to enable its fleet of close to 30 Mac devices to run Microsoft Windows as virtual machines (VM), reducing the need for separate devices to run different operating systems and bolstering its ability to deliver courses for both Mac and Windows software and applications.

Results Summary

Powered by Parallels Desktop for Mac, the user-friendliness and seamless integration of both MacOS and Windows have helped more than 20 IT instructors and thousands of students at NCC to focus on their teaching and learning instead of wasting time fixing technical issues. Physical resources are also optimized, as classes can be delivered in just one room of machines, as well as external venues such as coffee shops and hospitals.

Nepean Community College prepares Australian adults for a digital future with Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition

Not-for-profit education institution in Australia uses Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition to offer digital courses on both Mac and Windows to learners from all walks of life

Nepean Community College (NCC) is an adult learning institution created with the vision of inculcating a love for life-long learning in the communities around the Penrith and Blue Mountains area in the outskirts of Sydney, Australia.

The college is known for delivering high-quality and government-accredited courses to equip adults with the IT literacy necessary to lead successful and fulfilling lives in the modern digital world. Some of its most popular courses include "Bookkeeping for Small Business", "Computers for Total Beginners", and "Cyber Safety – How to Stay Safe Online".

In particular, NCC has a keen focus on empowering minorities, the disadvantaged and the disabled with digital skills, so that they can feel confident in their journey to function as contributing members of their community.

"These adults are particularly hard to reach for many reasons, and many of them are averse to technology," said Eric Wright, Principal, Nepean Community College. "Our goal is to create a learning exchange that enables them to feel engaged confidently and safely."

Over the past three years, more than 1,300 adults have passed through Nepean's doors, including more than 500 senior citizens who have no prior knowledge of IT, and 160 learners with disabilities.

Business Challenge

We live in a digital world, and today it has become nearly impossible for any member of society to avoid using technology in one form or another, especially in a mature economy like Australia.

For NCC, this means a constant need to diversify its courses to meet the needs of its learners. In recent years, for example, the college added courses like "Instagram for Business" and "LinkedIn for Business" to elevate its role in providing relevant real-world education to its adult audience.

In addition, the college serves many individuals with a disability from diverse technology backgrounds and experiences.

To deliver learning at a pace and rhythm that fits its diverse audience, growing catalog of courses, and an increasing number of students, NCC needed a device management strategy that is flexible and responsive.

Mobility was a concern, as NCC regularly takes its lessons out of the classroom and into community-based contexts. For instance, they may conduct a class in the neighborhood coffee shop so that the environment is comfortable and familiar to its students.

As a non-profit organization, cost-effectiveness was also critical.

"It would be nice to have two rooms – one full of Mac devices and one full of Windows-based PCs, but that would be impractical from a cost standpoint," Wright said.

In an attempt to bridge the operating system gap and allow its students to enjoy the best of both worlds, NCC originally experimented with a freeware virtualization application that allowed its Apple Mac desktop computers to run Microsoft Windows as a virtual machine (VM).

However, both instructors and students found the free application difficult to use, and wasted precious hours figuring out how certain software features worked and attempting to solve other technical problems they encountered.

These technical challenges were compounded by more than 20 instructors who specialize in delivering IT courses, and the productivity lost as a result was a significant cost to the college.

To fully deliver on its vision of quality and responsive courses designed for the community, NCC needed a device strategy that is flexible, versatile, and cost-effective. Without a dedicated IT team, NCC also needed the solution to be simple and easy-to-use, so that its staff and students can focus on the delivery and the actual learning instead of fussing over technological complexity.

Solution and Results

After surveying several options, NCC decided to deploy Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition on its fleet of close to 30 machines, comprising both MacBook and iMac devices.

All NCC's Apple Mac devices are now capable of running Microsoft Windows as a virtual machine, greatly improving the college's flexibility, versatility, and reliability.

Right off the bat, two improvements could be witnessed: increased productivity in the delivery of courses, and improved cost-savings.

Parallels Desktop for Mac was so easy to use that neither instructors nor students have any problems with picking it up. In fact, many of them could hit the ground running as the technology just disappears into the background.

"The way Parallels Desktop can combine both the Windows and Mac operating systems on one device yet allow them to run like native environments is really important here," said Wright. "Users are not aware of any difference and simply focus on their teaching and learning."

Being able to run two operating systems on one single device without having to reboot gave NCC's students the best of both Mac and Windows worlds, greatly enhancing the devices' versatility. The college was thus able to save money by avoiding the need to purchase and maintain new devices just for running Windows.

"We can teach senior citizens how to make home movies on iMovie in the morning, then easily switch over to small business accounting on Windows in the afternoon, all on one single device," said Wright.

Moreover, the college now needs only one room to deliver all its courses for both Mac and Windows software, as opposed to needing two or three separate rooms in the past. This has enabled it to maximize its physical resources, and potentially repurpose the newly created spaces for other more fruitful activities for students.

As each Windows VM is sandboxed, security has also improved.

"Our machines are nearly unbreakable now," said Wright. "The Macs are highly reliable and easy to maintain, and if anything goes wrong with Windows, we simply reinstall the VM and everything is rebuilt instantly."

Finally, NCC is happy to find that mobility is also enhanced with the latest version of Parallels Desktop.

The software is known for being light on computing resources, and the battery life of the MacBooks that are used to conduct courses externally can be further prolonged with Parallels Desktop's Travel Mode.

As society and the economy continues to become increasingly digitalized, NCC's role in democratizing digital literacy will only grow.

With the help of Parallels Desktop for Mac, the college can remain laser-focused on its goal of providing affordable access to digital education for members of its community.