

Bridge over Generational Waters

Remote support isn't just an efficient way to ensure unmatched uptime, it can also motivate professors to adopt the technologies their students favor.

UNIVERSITY AMPHITHEATERS CAN OFFER a unique anthropological insight to generational differences today. Here is what an attentive observer might notice: Students taking notes on laptops, while scanning online databases to prepare for the next research paper and sending text messages from their smartphones to set up study groups; meanwhile, the professor, after having written a formula on the chalk board, is turning on the overhead projector to illustrate his next point.

A 2007 study by the EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research revealed that the average student spends approximately 18 hours per week online, for schoolwork and recreation. For 6.6 percent of responding students, that number can reach more than 40 hours. Nearly three-quarters of students own laptops, and 12 percent of them use smartphones.¹ These numbers illustrate more than a trend, but a true lifestyle: Millennials and students who belong to Generation Now live, laugh and study online.

They also expect their professors to join them in the Digital Age. In an article titled *Technology and Learning Expectations of the Net Generation*ⁱⁱ, author Gregory R. Roberts relates the results of a study conducted with students from the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown. For these students, a professor's expertise in his or her field was "paramount," but it was nearly as important to them that faculty be able to "customize the class using the current technology available" as well as "professionally convey lecture points using contemporary software," such as PowerPoint. The article highlighted that for students of the NetGeneration — which encompasses both the Millennials and Generation Now — the ideal classroom was a hybrid environment in which interactive technologies met lecturing on even grounds.

Understanding that faculty's use of technology is a differentiating factor, universities and colleges have encouraged professors to embrace it, as evidenced by a Center for Digital Education survey of community colleges: 96 percent of responding colleges provide desktop computers to their full-time faculty — 82 percent provide laptops as well — and 100 percent offer professional development. Yet professors still show reticence when it comes to technology. These baby boomers and members of the Gap Generation grew up around transistor radios

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and touch-tone phones; for them, technology — especially the kind that seems to stubbornly break down when least expected — is more of a frustration than an addition.

This is something students and faculty have in common: When it comes to hardware and software malfunctions, they cannot be slowed down or inconvenienced. But how can IT support staff meet the needs and expectations of these two distinct groups of users? On one hand, students demand support that is quick and online; on the other hand, faculty want support that is easy, user-friendly and that takes into account their expertise level in the realm of technology.

Colleges offering professional development: **100 percent**

Colleges providing desktop computers to their full-time faculty: **96 percent**

Colleges providing laptops to their full-time faculty: **82 percent**

Colleges providing technical support for faculty-owned computers: **78 percent**

Source: The Center for Digital Education 2008 Digital Community Colleges Survey

Next-generation remote support can help bridge the gap between these user groups by offering them assistance that meets their diverging needs. This type of solution can put students back online fast, while alleviating faculty reservations about using technology. Knowing that help is available quickly and easily when they need it, faculty can feel free to try — and adopt — new technologies.

Support for all

Providing assistance suitable to faculty and students is only one facet of IT support staff's job. They must also contend with the disparities and preferences that exist within user groups. Each user favors different tools. Some prefer smartphones; others can't live without their laptop. Some swear by PCs; others will only use Macs. When also considering the myriad software combinations and configurations that make up any given system, one can imagine what a day in the life of an IT technician might look like.

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), in England, provides support to more than 10,000 students and staff members, using more than 80 networked applications in all aspects of the school's activities. For these users, remaining online is a must.

“Our IT department services a large, mobile population, which makes connectivity essential,” said Amber Miro, assistant director of IT Services at LSE. “We support desktop computers and laptops running Windows and Mac, as well as smartphones. Regardless of their preferences, our users cannot be separated from the resources they use to conduct and support teaching, learning and research.”

LSE adopted LogMeIn Rescue, a remote support solution that made it easy for IT support staff to provide assistance to a wide range of products and devices. This type of software as a service gives IT technicians remote access to the device in need of maintenance, letting them see exactly what the user sees. This helps remove the complexity of providing support to disparate sets of machines, facilitating IT support staff's job and minimizing frustration for end users. For students, the key advantage is the quick

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*Amber Miro, assistant director of IT Services,
London School of Economics and Political Science*

turnaround that remote support affords. For faculty, there is no need to explain technical issues or follow tedious phone instructions. Remote support is like having an IT assistant next to them, ready to help. It can even remotely complete routine tasks, such as defragmenting, for those who want well-performing machines but do not have the time to conduct regular maintenance.

“The fact that our IT support staff can access the devices remotely makes it easy for our users, who do not have to get involved in troubleshooting: The technician can do it for them,”



Students



Professors

“Remote support was a major time-saver; it helped us stop commuting across the city. Our staff can now spend more time on the technical problem, rather than on the move, and the turnaround time for our users has been reduced as well.”

Ruben Mendez, manager of User Support Services, Fordham University

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In addition, there is no precondition to providing support: Assistance can be delivered on the fly to users with an Internet connection.

Effective all around

Remote support’s cost-effectiveness can suit any university budget, creating savings and enabling IT support departments to do more with less.

“We wanted to make the most of our resources. With 15 technicians supporting more than 4,000 faculty and staff on three campuses, we had to make sure their time was well employed,” said Ruben Mendez, manager of User Support Services at Fordham University, adding that walking to and from buildings created downtime.

Users had to wait for a technician to commute to their location. Mendez shared. “It was frustrating for the technicians and delayed response time to the users.”

Because it helps reduce the number of trips to the physical machines, remote support appeared as the appropriate solution to these issues. Since implementing it Fordham has seen a significant improvement in support staff and user satisfaction. With the new solution, his IT staff said it resolves 75 percent of reported technical issues on the same day.

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But the time efficiencies do not stop there. With remote support, one technician can run multiple problem tickets at once, easily switching from one chat or remote control session to another — especially useful during time-consuming tasks such as installations. This speeds up troubleshooting and lowers average handle times, resulting in happier users returning to productivity faster.

Net Generation,
Millennials,
Generation Now

Baby boomers,
Gap Generation

Cutting-edge technologies of the times: fast computers, smartphones, Internet and Web-based applications.

Cutting-edge technologies of the times: transistor radios, television, eight tracks and touch-tone telephones.

Digital natives

Digital immigrants

Tech-savvy

Tech learners

Preferred means of communication: e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging.

Preferred means of communication: in person, telephone.

“Since LogMeIn Rescue is Web-based, deploying it was simple and we did it quickly. It took us 10-15 minutes to deploy Rescue for four technicians, and they could start supporting users right away.”

Viki McVane, manager of the Solution Call Center, Fairmont State University

Deployment in one day

Moreover, with this type of software as a service, universities do not need to install software on machines. This particularity helps save on upfront and ongoing costs and makes it possible to deploy the remote support tool in a day or less.

“At Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community and Technical College, we support 7,450 students and approximately 2,000 computers spread across five campuses,” said Viki McVane, Solution Call Center manager. “When we evaluated remote support solutions, one of our key requirements was rapid deployment. We couldn’t afford to take weeks or months for elaborate

implementation and training: We had to hit the ground running. And that's exactly what we got with LogMeIn Rescue."

McVaney and her staff recently deployed LogMeIn Rescue and found that the ease of installation made rollout quick.

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Next-generation help

Fordham University, LSE and Fairmont University have one thing in common, they have found a way to bridge the generational waters through IT support services for students, faculty and staff on and off their campuses. The schools use LogMeIn Rescue to provide fast and friendly remote support — that works equally well for digital natives and digital immigrants.

What makes this possible are LogMeIn Rescue's easy-to-use capabilities like desktop sharing, file transfer, system diagnostics, remote reboot and reconnect, and others. In addition, the Web chat facilities support many situations, and for the ultra mobile student population at LSE, this kind of flexibility is imperative.

"We sought a solution that allows us to support students and staff wherever they are located — on campus, offsite or even abroad," Miro said. "Now connecting to remote users — here in the U.K. and even those abroad — is very simple and quick. Seeing what the user sees on their desktop helps us troubleshoot more efficiently and get them working again sooner."

Another key differentiating feature of LogMeIn Rescue is that it addresses end users' privacy concerns. Indeed, with remote support, faculty and students can be wary that IT staff will access their machines without authorization.

"Our user population is comprised of many researchers and professors whose projects are their life's work," Mendez said. "Intellectual property and confidentiality of student grades and other data are extremely important to them. A remote support solution that granted IT technicians access to staff computers needed to address their privacy concerns."

With LogMeIn Rescue, end users can rest assured that their privacy is preserved because they retain complete control of the support session.

"LogMeIn Rescue helped meet security needs because it requires the user to give us green light to access their system — for a specific session," Mendez explained. "Once the support session is complete, the Rescue applet is automatically deleted, disabling repeat access rights to the remote machine."

To help faculty and students enjoy the many advantages of remote support, convenient access and sufficient awareness are a must. That's why LogMeIn Rescue created the Calling Card — a unique feature that allows IT staff to install a desktop icon on university-owned machines. When users need assistance, they can quickly initiate a Web chat with a technician and begin a support session by clicking on the icon. LSE uses this feature to enable easy access to Virtual IT Assistance (VITA), its remote support service brand. IT staff placed VITA Calling Cards on all LSE-owned computers and heavily promoted this feature.

With capabilities like these, LogMeIn Rescue can help universities stand out among others by letting them provide the type of connected, engaging, technology-enabled learning environment students expect, while reassuring faculty that in the event of a technical incident, friendly help is a click away.

"Rescue maps very well to our requirements — it adds value, making our service more responsive at first contact," said Miro, adding that offering cutting-edge remote assistance service was one of the strategic goals of LSE. "At the end of the process, there really was just one choice, and that was LogMeIn Rescue."

From school desk to chair

For now, students will be students and faculty will be faculty. Soon, however, Millennials and Generation Now will join the ranks of their illustrious professors and become tomorrow's teachers. As they do so, technology will become an even more important component of daily academic life.

One thing that will never change, however, is the need for spotless, quick and frustration-free IT support — the kind that does the job right the first time. LogMeIn Rescue can help university IT staff keep everyone happy and connected by enabling them to provide reliable and efficient support when it's needed. With Rescue, whenever users — whether they are students halfway across the globe or faculty right there on campus — will ask in impatient unison: "When can I get this problem fixed?" IT support staff will be able to answer with confidence: "Right now, of course."

LogMeIn, Inc. | www.LogMeIn.com

Universities and colleges worldwide use LogMeIn Rescue to provide on-demand remote support to students, faculty and staff. IT support staff and helpdesks can gain control of a remote PC, Mac or smartphone over the web in seconds, without the need to pre-install software.

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¹The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2007
<http://connect.educause.edu/Library/ECAR/TheECARStudyofUndergradua/45075?time=1226960789>

²Technology and Learning Expectations of the Net Generation
<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/EducatingtheNetGeneration/TechnologyandLearningExpectati/6056>

³The Center for Digital Education 2008 Digital Community Colleges Survey

