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Lucas County, Ohio

SURPRISED BY SERVICE

Lucas County, Ohio, reduces breakdowns and streamlines technical support with Gateway computers.

You know you're doing something right when computers stop breaking down on a regular basis. Mike Jacobs, technology manager for Lucas County, Ohio, can attest to that. After a year with the department, Jacobs shifted gears by standardizing the county's desktops on Gateway. A drop in computer breakdowns became very evident. His staff handled 3,300 work orders for the county's 46 agencies in 2005. Since the county standardized on Gateway desktops, far fewer of its work orders relate to hardware problems.

When Jacobs came aboard four years ago, Lucas County, the fifth largest in Ohio, had a mixed bag of installed systems — some old, some new — brand names and generic.

"In a word, it was unmanageable," Jacobs said.

A dearth of reliable desktops and dependable vendor service made application deployments difficult for IT staff and dragged out repair turnaround times, according to Jacobs.

Technical support staff were expected to know how to support applications on a variety of hardware and Windows operating systems, and Jacobs had to manage multiple vendors simultaneously. He searched for a vendor that offered hardware and service reliable enough for a countywide

deployment. Three years ago, Jacobs added Gateway E-Series desktops to his inventory and was impressed by the company's devoted sales representatives, rapid part replacements and surprisingly affordable price.

BUILDING A PROGRAM

Jacobs' previous private-sector experience assisted with the development of a PC program based on standards and specific services. With the support of the Lucas County Office of Management and Budget, 46 county departments started to switch their desktops to Gateway and began purchasing through an OMB central technology fund.

"My sales background was helpful because I was able to sit down and present a constructive business plan, discuss it and show the benefits," Jacobs said.

There was some initial minor resistance to the change of central purchasing. As the program matured and computer problems were reduced, it was noticed that employees were more productive. Bulk purchasing also allowed the benefit of lower pricing.

Jacobs was pleased with Gateway's prices, even though they weren't the least expensive on the market. He said technology-

CUSTOMER PROFILE

AGENCY:

Lucas County, Ohio, Department of Information Services (LCIS)

MISSION:

LCIS establishes technology standards across the enterprise to provide efficient and reliable access to information for all county employees and customers. The Lucas County Auditor and the Board of County Commissioners benefit from the enterprise standards.

TECHNOLOGY OBJECTIVE:

Use technology to improve LCIS services, ensuring customer access to business-critical systems while controlling cost.

GATEWAY SOLUTION:

Lucas County has installed Gateway E-4300 and E-4500 PCs, M275, M460 and M680 laptops, 9415 and 9515 servers and an 850 storage enclosure.

ROI:

Gateway PCs helped Lucas County reduce computer breakdowns, and having mostly Gateway systems has helped the county streamline maintenance and support for desktop technology.

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purchasing decisions based solely on price usually prove costlier in the long term. The culprit, Jacobs said, is typically lost productivity from habitual breakdowns and inefficient vendor support.

“Our technology purchases are based on several factors so that we can take a look at a vendor from an aspect of price, quality, references and other critical points. That means we can make a ‘best value’ decision,” he said, “as opposed to just a ‘lowest cost’ purchase.”

To date, Lucas County has purchased primarily three different Gateway PC models. This year, the county is purchasing the Gateway E-4500 with Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology¹. The county also purchased the M275 laptop to use both the wireless and tablet features. Several models of Gateway rack-mounted servers have also been purchased.

“I can’t say enough good things about the support we’ve had from Gateway,” Jacobs said. “It is far superior to any of the other companies.”

Switching most PCs to Gateway enabled the county’s support technicians to focus their repair knowledge on fewer variables in hardware and OS — increasing efficiency and saving money by decreasing employee downtime while repairs are made.

“It lowers overall costs,” Jacobs said. “It makes it much easier for our technical staff to be able to work on a standard hardware platform and a standard operating system.”

The LCIS network and PC technicians are members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union. The group became a Gateway Certified Warranty Provider to keep all maintenance in house. Gateway ships the county any needed parts, and county support technicians perform repairs. Jacobs said the parts arrive the next day like clockwork and occasionally have shown up within an hour and a half.

“We didn’t ask for anything special. We just placed the order and bam — the part was here,” he said.

“There was one time when our Gateway sales rep, who lives in Columbus, brought a hardware part to us — delivered it himself because he knew how important it was for us,” Jacobs added. “I’ve never had any other salesmen do that.”

During one search for new servers, Jacobs asked another vendor if he could expect an immediate replacement in the event he lost a server. The salesman flatly said no and recommended he have a replacement on hand because the vendor didn’t keep any servers in its supply line.

Gateway had a different answer.

“Gateway just said, ‘Oh not a problem. We sell directly, and we sell through channels. If you



Lucas County, Ohio, standardized on Gateway desktops, such as the E-4500 with Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology¹ for improved reliability.

needed a server, we could get you one typically the next day,” Jacobs said.

TAKING OUT THE TRASH

In addition, Jacobs uses Gateway’s PC disposal program, which reclaims PCs at the end of their lives and disposes of them for the county. The county receives a certificate documenting that Gateway cleared the hard drives of county-related information and disposed of the computers in a manner approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Before using the disposal program, the county’s facilities staff had to lug out the old PCs, erase their hard drives and store them. The county’s solid waste district usually disposed of them when facilities management accumulated a big enough container of them.

“It was just time consuming and expensive,” Jacobs said.

Lucas County will kick off its first desktop life cycle replacement in 2006, annually replacing 500 computers.

“PC disposal is a real hands-on, intensive process,” said Jacobs. “That really solved a big problem for us.”

Working with Gateway, Jacobs receives reliable technology and dependable service throughout the life cycle of Lucas County’s desktop equipment. That allows the county’s 46 departments to concentrate on the mission of government, instead of solving IT challenges.

