



## Walsall College

IT's Personal

**Walsall College is a further education comprehensive college in the West Midlands, currently educating approximately 7000 students ranging from age 14 to 75. It has won a number of specialist accreditations and awards in a variety of subjects and as a centre of learning for the whole community, its chief aims are: "all young people to reach the age 19 ready for skilled employment or higher education, to tackle the Adult Skills Gap and to raise and widen participation in Higher Education."**

The college firmly believes in educating for a business environment so its' students are fully prepared for the real world when they leave: "Walsall College prepares students to become effective and aspiring contributors to business and the community while maximising their own potential. We are dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, placing the student at the centre of all we do. Through partnerships with market leading, multinational organisations across the curriculum and via specialist Academies, we offer best practice in a variety of professional and vocational areas. We create workforce development solutions for SMEs, public sector organisations and blue chip companies. Collectively, we are passionate about extending learners' real world experience, commercial awareness and industry skills. When they leave us, our students are not only qualified, but "job ready"."

As the college has such a business led, work -ready philosophy for its' students, it realised that it was very important for the college to update its IT department so that its networks and servers were secure and dependable. As a forward thinking college with extensive expansion plans, with a new college due to open in Sept 2009 to add to their already existing four sites, they realised that the time was right to invest in updating their data storage capacity and consolidating their servers, investing in the new technology would also bring other cost saving benefits.

They therefore decided to invest in a fibre channel Storage Area Network and a number of blade servers that would be housed in a blade chassis. After having spoken to 12 companies, just five of these made it to the tender stage. The Viglen Storage Group was then chosen from these to implement the new server upgrade.



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When asked why Viglen was successful in its bid, Andy Griggs, Walsall's IT Technical Manager, says: '(Viglen had) Competitive pricing with the enterprise solution that we were after, and Viglen could provide all the products tendered for. We wanted one company to install the Servers and the Storage Area Network.'

After working closely with the college, The Viglen Storage Group proposed a Hitachi AMS 200 with 4 TB useable capacity as the essential Storage Area Networks prime requirement at Walsall College. An integrated backup solution was also required to backup the Storage Area Network. The AMS offered the College a highly scalable reliable and cost effective platform for a first SAN deployment with tiered storage, consolidation, backup and data archiving. The AMS 200 also allows for future expansion and can form part of the college's disaster recovery and business continuity procedures.

A 5 blade server was also supplied and is connected to the SAN through a McData switch. The backup is achieved utilising an Overland tape library and Veritas software. All the equipment was supplied and housed in 2 x 42u racks. Viglen also provides a maintenance contract as an ongoing service as part of the installation so Griggs and his team are covered for any eventuality.

The Viglen Storage Group designed, installed and configured the total solution, which was installed and working within 3 days, and Griggs is equally enthusiastic about the service which was provided by Viglen: "Viglen were very professional in their approach, they ensured that all requirements were met prior to installation. Equipment delivery was on time. Installation went without a hitch and the training given to staff was more than adequate to meet our needs."

Everything was planned meticulously by The Viglen Storage Group and Griggs' IT team at the college, so there were no surprises, even when it came to the results which were exactly what the college had expected! Although the rest of the college may be initially unaware of all the improvements that have been made behind the scenes, they are definitely experiencing the benefits of having quicker back up times & a safer storage solution. The SAN has resulted in improving efficiency at the college the clustered servers reduce the risk of data loss, and back up times have improved.

The changes make for increased efficiency across the whole college and will allow for further IT expansion. The college says it will even look at expanding the SAN further at a later date.

The updated servers and SAN will contribute to Walsall College fulfilling its aims to "...continue to progress a vision for the future with a curriculum which is not only business enabled but business driven ...building real world skills for today's jobs and fuel innovations which will propel the industries of tomorrow. Empowering and motivating individuals to become job-ready, effective contributors to industry while fulfilling their own potential, extending their aspirations and feeding their creativity in a dynamic and interactive forum which brings business leaders and learners together."

Viglen CEO Bordan Tkachuk comments "The fact that the installation of a new storage solution & SAN is barely noticeable other than to those behind the scenes really is a sign of great success, and all departments at the college will be better off having data storage that is secure and fast."



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