



VICTORIA COLLEGE

CASE STUDY



DATA INTEGRATION
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The college offers a high standard of facilities to its staff and students, including newly refurbished and spacious classrooms; nine specialist laboratories; three art rooms and four information technology suites.

The challenge

One of the buildings on campus has fourteen classrooms in total, and this facility was using a hard wired network to provide its students and staff with access to the Internet and network resources; however this access was limited by only being available via its four information technology suites without any support for mobile devices that would enable web-based learning in ordinary classrooms.

"We had over 75 laptops available for students throughout the college, but we were only able to provide network access via a handful of rooms, which meant that staff had to book ahead to use a computer room if the Internet was needed for studies," commented Nick Faria, ICT Technical Services Manager at Victoria College. "Online tutoring and research is critical for many departments such as Science, Mathematics and Language, yet students constantly had to move classrooms to use these facilities."

As with many educational establishments, students at Victoria College wanted to use their own devices on campus – a trend known as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). "Students could bring in their own devices, such as iPads, mobile phones and laptops, but we couldn't offer them access to the Internet which was becoming a cause of frustration," added Faria.

One other challenge was the nature of the college buildings - many of the walls were made of granite which made it difficult to roll out the hard wired network to all of the classrooms.

"Quite simply, Aruba's wireless technology works. Since the day it was deployed by Data Integration, we haven't had to touch it."

Nick Faria
ICT Technical Services
Manager
Victoria College

The approach

In 2012, Victoria College decided to look at wireless networking as a solution to extend access to the Internet to every classroom. "Not only did we need to give staff and students access to online learning and research facilities in a much more flexible way, we also wanted to enable them to share resources," commented Faria. "Wireless seemed the obvious approach given the restrictions of our campus environment and physical nature of the buildings."

As a trusted and recognised supplier to educational establishments throughout the UK, Data Integration was asked by Victoria College to trial one of three wireless solutions. "We first met Data Integration in March 2012 and they recommended that we evaluate Aruba's wireless technology," commented Faria. "We also looked at two other wireless vendor's technology from different resellers and trialled all three."

The solution

Following the trials which lasted a year, Victoria College chose Aruba Networks wireless technology over the other vendors. "Whilst all three solutions worked well enough, Aruba stood out for two key reasons: it was an out-of-the-box solution at a highly competitive price, and it offered a lifetime warranty on the hardware," explained Faria.

Data Integration worked closely with Victoria College to specify the right Aruba solution and advised on the best way to deploy the technology with least disruption to the college and its students.

"We recommended that Victoria College deploy Aruba Access Points in each classroom, along with an Aruba Mobility Controller for centralised management and control," commented David Roberts, Public Sector Account Manager at Data Integration. "In such a complex campus environment, multiple access points are far more efficient as opposed to one or two high-capacity wireless access points that potentially lose coverage because of attenuation through thick granite walls."

The benefits

Victoria College has been able to realise a number of key benefits since deploying the Aruba wireless network.

Resilience

Every access point provided by Aruba comes with a lifetime warranty, which means Victoria College has complete peace of mind about delivering optimum levels of Wi-Fi connectivity for its staff and students. "Other companies wanted to charge us for support and on-going warranty costs," warned Faria. "Thankfully, Aruba's lifetime warranty is not a service we have had to take up yet, but we know that if anything should happen we are covered with an immediate replacement."

Ease of deployment

Data Integration set up and configured the Aruba Controller for Victoria College, with the college's own IT staff handling the access point deployment and small amount of cabling required to facilitate the solution. "The whole implementation took less than two days," recalled Faria. "Data Integration was exemplary in its attention to detail and its technical team went to great lengths to transfer their knowledge to us about the Aruba technology, including management and troubleshooting."

Enhanced learning environment

Since deploying a Wi-Fi network throughout all of its classrooms, Victoria College has transformed the way its students and staff are able to work. "Offering access to the Internet is vital in enabling an enriched learning experience, and we are now able to offer this in most rooms, be it from our own laptops we provide or via students' own devices," commented Faria. "Staff are able to teach a lesson without the interruption of having to move to the nearest available computer room, and both teaching and learning is certainly more fluid and effective as a result," he added.

Secure network access

The Aruba wireless technology uses the college's existing VLAN and firewall to filter network traffic, which means that the college is able to protect its data and information, and prevent network threats often associated with a BYOD environment.

The future

Given the success of the Aruba Wi-Fi implementation, Victoria College is planning to extend its wireless capabilities to other campus buildings. "We have got about 50 students that are currently using their own or school owned devices to access network resources using our wireless network, and this time next year that figure will be more like 200," enthused Faria. "As the Aruba platform continues to prove its stability, we plan to expand Wi-Fi capabilities into our main building and open up the network to visitors."

"Data Integration is highly familiar with Aruba wireless technology. If we had a question, they knew the answer without exception."

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We provide these services to over 300 leading organisations in Higher Education, Insurance, Finance and the Public Sector, benefiting from reduced cost, simplified solutions and optimised performance.