

HP/Windows 7 Implementation



Most everyone has heard the news: Palm Beach State College is replacing the Dell computers with Hewlett Packard computers and moving from the Windows XP operating system to the Windows 7 operating system. Student, faculty and staff machines have already been replaced on the second and third floors of the Lake Worth campus library. Yours will be replaced, too, in the near future.

Questions and comments tend to fall into one of two categories:

1. It's about time!
2. Why are you replacing my computer? It's only a year old.

In the fall of 2008, Hewlett Packard approached the technology department of Palm Beach Community College with a proposal to replace all campus computers with new HP computers. This school, as most educational institutions in the state of Florida, had been a Dell customer for many years. Since computers are a vital tool in the operations of the college, and saving money is always a good idea, discussions began in earnest in the spring of 2009.

Why Windows 7:

The change to the Windows 7 operating system was added to this project as it became obvious that Windows XP would be phased out and would no longer be a supported Microsoft system. The

college took a proactive approach by staying as current with technology as possible. All parties agreed that the prudent course of action was to change the operating system when the computers themselves were changed. By late summer 2009 all parties agreed in principle to proceed. Then the real work began.

Hewlett Packard presented the college with a very attractive price to replace all existing non-grant funded Dell computers with new HP computers. The terms of the deal required trading the Dell computers to HP to offset the cost of installing the new HP computers. This meant the college would be freed from selling surplus computers and it meant that none of the old computers would be available for purchase by college employees. It guaranteed an exceptional price for business class computers for Palm Beach State College to upgrade to better technology.

Issues and Resolutions:

As work began on the HP/Windows 7 rollout plan, several issues surfaced. They all seemed to fall into one of two categories: software or printers. Because Windows 7 enforces a much tighter security protocol on programs than Windows XP did, software compatibility became an issue. One of the first tasks was to discover what software exists on the nearly 4,000 college computers, which versions and which of these programs will work with Windows 7.

With the help of Microsoft, IT staff determined that over 5,000 software programs are installed on college computers. Many of these represented various versions of the same software, e.g. there were eight versions of QuickBooks. After many hours of assessment and consolidation, the list was whittled down to approximately 500 unique software titles. With no central software distribution center for software and a rather loose

installation policy in Windows XP, this number represents an estimate only.

The migration to Windows 7 has prompted a change in software distribution and management to allow IT to better serve the software needs of faculty and staff. By delivering all software from a central location (System Center), IT staff will be able to help departments stay current with software and manage users more efficiently. Palm Beach State is also moving to deliver software virtually, thereby allowing you to have access to all of your software on any computer, a huge step forward for faculty and staff. One piece of this change is the recent desktop consolidation. These changes help keep the college at the forefront of computer technology, providing your faculty and staff with the latest and finest tools.

With the move to Windows 7, printers, too, became an issue. Older printers may not be compatible with the new operating system. Printers connected with parallel cables will not work with Windows 7. As with software, the college does not have a good method to determine what, where and how many printers exist. By physically examining all printers in the college, IT has determined that most current printers will work with the new operating system. For the few that will not, users will be connected to a networked printer, if feasible, or the printer will be replaced, if that makes more sense.

Determining a schedule for computer deployment has provided several challenges. Because of software requirements, faculty, student and classroom machines need to be replaced together. Staff machines, though spread more widely and thinly, can be changed in smaller groups without disturbing the work flow. The current plan is to change most of the 1,000 staff computers during spring break. If your computer is scheduled to be changed, you will be notified with instructions on how to prepare. When you return from the break,

your new computer will be connected and your old computer will stay beside the new for a few weeks in case there are questions that need to be resolved.

Value:

These changes and others continue to position Palm Beach State College at the vanguard of computer technology and services. They provide our faculty and staff the best tools for teaching today's students and equipping them with the necessary knowledge to compete in the global market. The improvements we make today will confer multiplied benefits in the future through greater efficiencies and more effective teaching and working.

We appreciate your continued support and value your opinions and suggestions knowing you have only the highest regard for our students and Palm Beach State College.



By George Sullivan