Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Employee training ensures a successful migration for the Max Planck Society

HPE Education Services trains 1,600 administrative employees during Microsoft® migration

Objective
To enable administrative employees to continue their work without disruption or difficulties after the migration to Microsoft® Windows® 7 and Office 2010

Approach
Public tender for Microsoft Delta training and key user training in which a number of service providers participated

IT Matters
• Enabled smooth roll-out of the new PC workstation environment as the administrative employees received training at the same time

• Reported fewer issues to the central help desk after the migration compared to similar projects that were not accompanied by employee training

• Provided less pressure on the institutes' in-house IT departments

Business Matters
• Ensured confident administrative employees, able to continue their day-to-day work in the new software environment without issues

• Increased employee motivation and satisfaction as a result of training that was tailored to the individual needs of participants

In order to ensure a smooth transition to Microsoft Windows 7 and Office 2010 for administrative employees at all of the Max Planck Society's institutes, the society's in-house ICT department accompanied the upgrade to new PCs with across the board training from Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

Challenge

IT supporting innovative research
The Max Planck Society is Germany's most successful research organisation. Since its establishment in 1948, no fewer than 17 Nobel Laureates have emerged from the ranks of its scientists, putting it on a par with the best and most prestigious research institutions worldwide. Currently 80 Max Planck Institutes conduct basic research in the service of the general public in natural sciences, life sciences, social sciences and the humanities. Max Planck Institutes focus on research fields that are particularly innovative, or that are especially demanding in terms of funding or time requirements.

"The institutes were delighted by our employee training services. Without the training provided by Hewlett Packard Enterprise, many of the employees would have found the transition difficult and disruptive to their work. It has allowed us to achieve our goal of increasing the satisfaction of administrative staff."

– Otfried Köllhofer, head of Unit IX, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) Department, Max Planck Society

"Within such an innovative organisation, it is only natural that we in the IT department would provide state-of-the-art PC workstations to support our 1,600 administrative employees," explains Otfried Köllhofer, head of Unit IX, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) Department, which manages the IT infrastructure for all administrative employees. In accordance with the statutes of the organisation, the individual institutes and research bodies each have their own autonomous IT departments to support them in their research activities. "We in the ICT department see ourselves as early adopters of new technologies. We also measure ourselves by the satisfaction of everyone who uses our services."

For this reason, the IT managers took the decision early on that the imminent upgrade to new PCs should also be accompanied by a migration to Microsoft Windows 7 and Office 2010. "We wanted our employees to benefit from the new features of the software. However, given the considerable amount of new features, we felt that this would only be achievable by offering appropriate, across-the-board training to accompany the roll-out," explains Köllhofer. After all, not only had the operating system interface and login procedure changed, but so too had many of the office software functions.

"It was also important to us that the entire project was positively received by the employees. We had learned from previous projects, where the decision had been taken not to provide training, that the knowledge and motivation of administrative employees should progress on an upward curve after the roll-out," Köllhofer explains. Moreover, in the past, there had been a sharp increase in queries to the central help desk and also the local IT organisations at the individual institutes, who are not even supposed to provide such software support to administrative employees.

Solution

Ensuring a smooth migration for the employees

After a public tendering procedure, the contract – for 160 full-day training courses at all of the society's locations throughout Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy – was finally awarded to Hewlett Packard Enterprise. The HPE education specialists had prepared a very detailed training concept based on the Max Planck Society specifications, and presented a convincing trainer guide. The proposed concept covered both the "Delta" training courses; designed to introduce all administrative employees to the new features of the Microsoft software.

This was in addition to the key user training courses; in-depth training for more experienced end-users at the research society who would then be able to provide first-line assistance to colleagues with questions about the Microsoft software. HPE Education Services also prepared extensive training material for both types of training course.

According to Steffen Spielberger, who managed the project: "Over the course of the project, the standard content of the Delta training courses had to be varied greatly in order to meet the, in some cases, vastly divergent levels of knowledge and training requirements of the individual employees that emerged. We greatly appreciated the fact that HPE responded to these varying needs with such flexibility."

It soon became clear that the different institutes wanted a different focus for their training; for instance, on Excel or PowerPoint. To ensure that the individual requirements of the course participants were met, the HPE trainers also asked, at the beginning of each course, on which areas they should focus the training and then modified the content accordingly.

Köllhofer: "Our users really appreciated this bespoke approach to training, not to mention the exceptional knowledge and teaching skills demonstrated by the trainers. Their enthusiasm and motivation also rubbed off on the course participants."

"What's more, the trainers also left time at the end to respond to individual questions – even subjects going above and beyond what had been covered during the training. It was clear to us from this that the trainers had considerable expertise and practical experience."

A total of five HPE trainers were involved in this training project at the Max Planck Society, which ran for five months in all. It was not only with regard to course content that their flexibility was required. HPE also assumed full professional responsibility for the set-up and installation of the necessary training facilities.

The two temporary classrooms each comprised 17 notebooks on which the course participants were provided with their familiar working environment, including all software and security settings.

Benefit

Increased satisfaction of administrative staff
The project managers of both the ICT team and HPE worked closely together to complete this feat of logistical planning. Optimising the training dates at the various institutes on the basis of geographical location ensured that there was a minimum distance for the notebooks and technical equipment to travel from one location to the next. "Co-ordinating it all was a complicated process because we had to take into account the desired migration dates of all the institutes involved," Spielberger recalls.

Customer at a glance

Software
- Microsoft Windows 7
- Microsoft Office 2010

HPE services
- HPE Education Services

It was also necessary to balance the needs of everyone involved; the course participants, technicians and training staff. "There was a genuine team spirit amongst everyone involved and all parties were willing to make concessions for the good of the project," Spielberger adds.

Flexibility was also required during the Bavarian school holidays when HPE suggested, in agreement with the project managers, to use floor walkers during the five-week training period at the society's administrative headquarters in Munich. The job of these floor walkers was to walk through the relevant departments the day after the migration and answer any employee questions, assist with troubleshooting and demonstrate new features. "This was very well received by the employees," explains Köllhofer. "Our aim was for the employees to say to us after the courses. There were some useful pointers that will immediately benefit our work."

For this reason, the HPE trainers placed a particular focus on the special features of the new software that were intended to significantly improve efficiency – such as the search function in the new Outlook or the Aero Shake function of Windows 7 for minimising windows simply by jiggling the mouse. Köllhofer explains: "Such cool functions stay with people for a long time after the training."

As hoped, employee feedback for the training ranged from "very well designed course" and "very interesting and informative training" to "really appreciated the fact that, at the end, the instructor also clarified and answered questions that went above and beyond the actual new features."

"The institutes were also delighted that we were offering training to their employees. We have heard time and time again that, without the training, many of the employees would have found the transition difficult and disruptive to their work," comments Köllhofer. "It has allowed us to achieve our goal, as the in-house IT service provider, of increasing the satisfaction of administrative staff. An added bonus was that the number of issues reported to our help desk was kept down to a manageable level. Without the training, we would no doubt have been inundated with support requests.

"The training courses also helped the entire roll-out to proceed in a relatively relaxed manner. While the employees were being trained, the technicians were left alone to replace the PCs, install the software and make sure it was working properly. All in all, HPE proved to be a strong, reliable, flexible partner with considerable project experience and played an important role in ensuring a smooth roll-out for everyone involved," concluded Köllhofer.

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