

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Pursuant to Section 19.84 Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Administration Committee** was held on Thursday, March 22, 2012 in Room 200 of the Northern Building, 305 East Walnut Street, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Present: Tom Lund, Mark Tumpach, Kris Schuller, Robert Miller

Excused: Tony Theisen

Also Present: Executive Streckenbach, Debbie Klarkowski, Kevin Raye, Carolyn Maricque, Maria Lasecki, Karen Ferry

I. Call Meeting to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tom Lund at 5:30 p.m.

II. Approve/Modify Agenda:

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

III. Approve/Modify Minutes of February 23, 2012.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Miller to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

1. Review of minutes:

- a. **Housing Authority (February 20, 2012).**

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Treasurer

2. Budget Status Financial Report, December, 2011.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Schuller to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Treasurer's Report.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Child Support Agency

4. Budget Status Financial Report, December, 2011.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Update re: Security Measures. *Referred from January meeting.*

Child Support Director Maria Lasecki reported that she had been working with Risk Manager Barb West who had also worked with Human Services regarding security. Risk Management, the Green Bay Police Department and Facilities also met to look at the entrances to the building to look at options for after-hours access. Lasecki also reported that she coordinated two verbal judo sessions that were led by Capt. Schultz and invited all staff in the Northern Building to attend. This was very well received and will be followed up with personal safety training on March 29.

Lasecki continued that Capt. Schultz was able to coordinate with Risk Management and the head of the security monitoring system at the Courthouse to allow Child Support the ability to call directly to their security room and they should be able to immediately send someone over from the Courthouse in the event of an emergency. Lund suggested that this be done for any area of the building that poses possible security or safety issues.

Lasecki provided the Committee with statements from two Child Support staff members, copies of which are attached, who could not attend the meeting. Child Support Specialist Karen Ferry was in attendance at the meeting and addressed the Committee. She stated that they appreciated how seriously the Committee took their concerns when they were brought to light. She also stated that Capt. Schultz has been very good about addressing concerns and providing information and she stated that a lot of the fear that had been in Child Support has been alleviated.

Lasecki stated that she is pleased with the progress that has been made on this issue and will continue to keep the Committee updated. Lund asked Interim IS Director Kevin Raye to follow up on the cameras being connected to the Courthouse security monitors and Raye indicated that he would do that.

Supervisor Miller questioned how many people showed up for verbal judo and Lasecki stated that all of the Child Support staff participated as well as a large portion of other employees from the Northern Building. Lasecki also stated that the verbal judo training will be presented to Human Services and will also be conducted again in the Northern Building later in the year.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to expand camera surveillance of the areas of the building in question to the Courthouse security monitors. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. Director's Report.

Lasecki referred to her Director's Report attached to the agenda and stated it has been a busy time of year in Child Support. They continue to work with Camera Corner on the laserfiche scanning system and in doing so they took a trip to Outagamie County to see the system in action which was very beneficial. She has also been talking with the staff about goals, aspirations and other professional training opportunities.

Lasecki also explained the Brown County Child Support Agency statistics that were provided in the agenda packet and stated that Brown County is one of the five largest counties in Wisconsin and within that category they are number one or two as far as performance. Lasecki felt when looking at some of the numbers relevant to how much child support is disbursed, it speaks to the amount of work that gets accomplished by her staff on a daily basis.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Information Services

7. Update re: Feasibility of the County using Google Docs v. MS Office Suite.

Kevin Raye provided handouts to the Committee, copies of which are attached, and read from one of the handouts that stated Microsoft develops Office to meet the needs of users from beginner to advanced, and intentionally considers the efforts and cost for organizations to manage and deploy the software. Open Office does not provide the same depth of functionality as Microsoft Office and as a result does not meet the needs of some end users. This will force the organization to manage multiple software suites, potentially increasing IT costs. When running a mixed software environment you also run the risk of interoperability issues which could further increase IT and helpdesk costs, inhibit productivity, and generate end users' frustration. Additional factors that could create higher costs include integration with existing systems and applications like ERP and content management systems and software updates.

Raye continued that during the course of his research, he found that the two suggested products do offer features on macros and pivot tables and some of those types of functions, however, they do not convert across. In looking at the different County departments, Raye found that there are a number of systems that take data that needs to be downloaded into different programs. At this point, Raye did not feel the feasibility was there for the County to convert to Google documents, however, he would like to revisit this down the road.

Miller respectfully disagreed with Raye and stated that if he is re-elected, he will revisit this situation. Miller wished to make the point that there is a list of places on the web that have adopted Open Office and Google Docs. He felt there would always be some issues in implementing a new system, however, when looking at the number of users, he felt this was a good idea.

Raye felt an outside consultant would be valuable in determining what the ramifications would be in converting to this type of system. Raye also stated that he had read a report that said for security purposes they take these applications and do what they call fuzz testing which is in essence trying to crash the application and in doing so, vulnerabilities and security issues come forward. When this fuzz testing was done on Microsoft Office, they found that they had zero exploitable and probable exploitable crashes. Open Office had 18 and the newer version had 15. These numbers concerned him from a security standpoint. Miller stated that he would not be able to rebut a study that he had not seen, but he did again respectfully disagree with Raye and stated that he felt that Microsoft has had more security flaws than other systems.

Streckenbach stated that in the event it is decided to do a full examination of whether or not the County could make a switch in this regard, he would want to see an outside source come in to give an opinion because we are talking about a number of different systems that we need to be cautious about.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Schuller to refer to the next Administration Committee. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

8. Director's Report.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Human Resources

9. Activity Report for February, 2012.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Schuller to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

10. Director's Report.

Human Resources Manager Debbie Klarkowski reported that the City of Green Bay had asked the County to sit down and talk to them about their health insurance plan as they are looking into a high deductible plan.

Supervisor Schuller asked Klarkowski what savings may result from having department head positions vacant, but Klarkowski did not have the information with her. She stated that she will bring a breakdown of vacancy savings to the next meeting.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Schuller to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Department of Administration

11. Budget Status Financial Report, December, 2011.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

12. Countywide 2011 Financial Statement Results – unaudited.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

13. Vehicle Listing as of 12/31/2011.

Schuller questioned how much time it took to generate this report and wondered if it was really necessary. Maricque stated that it is labor intensive because they need to send it out to the departments so they can validate what is in the system and then check the mileage on all of the vehicles to update the records. County Executive Troy Streckenbach stated that he would like this information provided to the Public Works Department as they are doing the fleet management conversion. He also stated that the Outagamie County Executive had contacted him to see if he was interested in pursuing a potential fleet management cooperative arrangement where the Counties would purchase equipment together in somewhat of a lease fashion.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

14. 2012 Budget Adjustment Log.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

15. Interim Director's Report.

Interim Director of Administration Carolyn Maricque stated that in addition to the items contained in her Director's Report, they did go through the bond sale on March 15, 2012 and the bonds will be dated March 29, 2012. The average rate that they got was 3.6% so there was about a \$6.4 million dollar savings for the CDA bonds over the life. This was not quite the amount they were expecting due to the rate changing, however, it is still a significant savings.

Maricque also wished to advise the Committee that the County will be bringing a resolution back because the Board only approved the reimbursement for the radio interoperability project and therefore the construction projects for the Highway Department that were funded by bonding cannot be started until June.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Miller to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

#15a Resolution re: Reauthorization of Self-Funded Worker's Compensation.

Motion made by Supervisor Tumpach, seconded by Supervisor Schuller to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

County Clerk

16. Budget Status Financial Report, December, 2011.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to receive and place on file. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Corporation Counsel – No agenda items.

Other

17. Audit of bills.

Motion made by Supervisor Schuller, seconded by Supervisor Miller to pay bills. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

18. Such other matters as authorized by law.

Lund thanked the Committee and department heads for their work over the last term and stated that it had been a pleasure working with them. He also wished to wish Supervisor Theisen well in his retirement from the Board.

Motion made by Supervisor Miller, seconded by Supervisor Tumpach to adjourn at 6:17 p.m. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio
Recording Secretary

To the Administrative Committee:

I was one of the child support specialists that spoke at the original meeting regarding concealed carry earlier this year. After I left the meeting, I felt confident that concealed carry would not be allowed in the building, so when the Board ultimately decided to allow it, I was extremely disappointed.

But since then, there have been security updates that have given me at least options. In the past we had panic buttons that never worked and calls made to police department, whereby the officers never showed. I feel fairly confident now that if there is an incident, we can count on some immediate back up.

My questions at the original meeting had to do with what level of threat has to occur before it would be appropriate to call the police? No one seemed to have an answer to that question. But after discussing this with Captain Schultz, he did answer the question because he indicated that **any time** you are able to view a gun on the carrier, that could be construed a threat. I now have an option whether or not I want to continue the conversation with a client or even see him/her if the gun is viewable in the lobby.

I understand there are no easy answers to security whether there are bans in place or not. I do appreciate the fact that the committee is following up on this matter and hope and pray that our agency remains a safe environment.

Thank you



Bonnie Deinet

Brown County Enforcement Specialist

(920) 448-7627

Administrative Committee Members:

First I would like to thank all of you for taking our safety seriously. I understand that many believe the concealed carry law change shouldn't make us any less safe and that brings some comfort. I also believe our jobs contain a degree of risk regardless of concealed carry. I think we have all been aware of that risk and the thought of it being legal to carry a weapon made us even more uncomfortable. I also greatly appreciate the action that has been taken on our behalf. There has been more attention paid to our safety in the last two months than I have heard or seen in the past 17+ years. I agree that a large portion of preparedness is our own awareness and training. I want to say a special thank you to our Administrator and Captain Randy Schultz for giving us the opportunity to participate in verbal judo training. I also look forward to the Personal Safety training later this month. There is no way to prepare for every scenario without the possibility of overreacting and spending significant amounts of money. I think the actions that have been taken are appropriate and appreciated. I also think this is a fluid issue that won't go away and will continually remain in our minds as we do our jobs daily. Again, thank you very much for taking us seriously and requesting action be taken to insure our safety.

Tracy Tilot/Child Support

1201 8th St

Green Bay WI

So, You're Considering OpenOffice.org / LibreOffice

It's important to understand the overall potential impact on your business before you assume immediate cost savings based on licenses alone. Here are a few areas to consider before you rely on OpenOffice.org / LibreOffice for your business.

OpenOffice.org / LibreOffice May Not Be Free.

The cost of software goes beyond the acquisition cost. It is important to consider the following:

- Total costs: Business impact; like software issues, integration, incompatibility, run-time errors, downtime, unreliable support and security vulnerability.
- Total benefit: Such as reliable supports, updates, accessibility, and security.
- Integration cost: The cost associated when you decide to use a different software platform.
- Management: Can it be easily managed? Large companies tend to have this issue because they don't have a unified system.
- Deployment costs: Can it handle corporate size business productivity? In addition to the compromise or extra benefits of software alternatives.

"With OpenOffice.org... There was from the very beginning total uncertainty about the formatting of documents and also about their inconsistency when shared outside our production group." Eros Borgogelli, Information Systems Coordinator, Ciar

Microsoft Office is the best productivity software in the market. Microsoft develops Office to meet the needs of users from beginner to advanced, and intentionally

City Estimates 27 percent cost savings for Microsoft vs. Mixed Environment with OpenOffice. *City of Reykjavik, Iceland*

considers the effort and cost for organizations to manage and deploy the software. OpenOffice/LibreOffice does not provide the same depth of functionality as Microsoft Office as a result do not meet the needs of some end users. This will force your organization to manage multiple software suites potentially increasing IT costs. When running a mixed software environment you are also running the risk of interoperability issues which could further increase IT and helpdesk costs, inhibit productivity, and generate end users frustration. Additional factors that could create higher costs include integration with your existing systems and applications like ERP and content management systems and software updates. LibreOffice/OpenOffice does not allow for incremental software updates. Instead it requires a complete uninstall and reinstall every time you need to update the software.

Why Compromise?

You can get it all with Microsoft Office. Office drives increasing business value through innovations that span basic functionality, like copy and paste, to advanced features like business intelligence. LibreOffice/OpenOffice does not deliver a complete productivity suite. Critical components like email and calendaring are absent, not to mention equivalent software to Publisher, OneNote, Business Contact Manager and SharePoint Workspace. LibreOffice / OpenOffice also lack some commonly used components, for instance; they do not ship with commonly used functionality like user friendly ribbons, clipart, SmartArt or Pivot Charts. Organizations may have to fill

these application gaps with product extensions, additional software or customizations adding to cost and complexity.

Limited Collaboration.

Technology can enhance the way people work together. Collaboration technology should facilitate ease of sharing, and trust in the fidelity of information shared. To facilitate collaboration, Office 2010 has many new features including co-authoring, integration with the Microsoft Unified Communications technologies in addition to the new online companion applications, the Office Web Applications. People using OpenOffice/LibreOffice are limited to using disparate email and document repositories to share and edit documents one person at a time. To take advantage of advanced collaboration technologies will require additional software and possibly more customization. In addition to sharing documents, information formatting integrity is critical. LibreOffice/OpenOffice can read and output many file types, however vital information like formatting structures, calculations, layout, and macros may not be preserved when sharing with non OpenOffice/LibreOffice users. Whether you have a mixed group of users or plan to share documents with people outside of your organization you may not be able to trust that people receive the document with the intended content and formatting.

Securing Sensitive Information.

Document security is important whether you want to lock down a work in progress or restrict access to sensitive content. OpenOffice/LibreOffice are limited to only password protecting files. Although password protected documents can be effective, they do not ensure security and may cause additional complexity. Advantage and also weakness of OpenOffice/LibreOffice for being an open source software means that many users have the ability to alter the state of the software by integrating their own design, which could lead to security vulnerability issue. Microsoft Office provides a robust set of features for

securing documents that reduces the risk and cumbersome of password only protection. Information Rights Management (IRM) allows individuals and administrators to specify permissions to documents, workbooks, and presentations. This helps prevent sensitive information from being printed, forwarded, or copied by unauthorized people. After permission for a file has been restricted using IRM, the access and usage restrictions are enforced no matter where the information is.

"Unlike Microsoft Office, OpenOffice is not integrated with other collaborative platforms. And because it has to be integrated with other third party solutions, developing a collaboration portal could be more complex and costly... Microsoft, on the other hand, delivers an integrated approach which is of great value to us... We don't mind paying the cost of migrating back to Microsoft Office as we believe the business value we get from the SharePoint portal solution is well worth the investment."

Tan Lip Kee, Managing Director, **Hardmetal Knives Sdn Bhd**

No Off-Premise Capabilities.

The momentum of cloud computing continues to grow. Gartner predicts that by 2012, twenty percent of all businesses will own no IT assets due to cloud enabled services, virtualization and employees running personal desktops and notebooks on corporate networks. Microsoft Office 365 provides the greatest set of productivity tools in the market today and is built upon the same software which Gartner rates as a "leader" in 8 of the magic quadrants for productivity and collaboration. OpenOffice/LibreOffice does not provide any other deployment option besides the desktop. Microsoft provides a seamless experience across the PC, phone, and browser.

Considering The Future.

20 years ago, productivity software was introduced to improve on manual systems of communicating and managing business. Today productivity software has grown into a sophisticated set of tools that go beyond the rudimentary software of 20 years ago. New technologies in collaboration, communications, business intelligence, and online services are converging with the core productivity software applications. As new advances in technology become standard features in the productivity suite you want to ensure that the software you use will meet your needs today and over the next few years. OpenOffice/LibreOffice may be limited in providing the next generation of productivity, cloud computing, lacking the ecosystem of enabling server and consumer collaboration technologies like SharePoint and SkyDrive. Choosing Microsoft Office will help ensure that you can take advantage of the next generation of productivity software.

"I don't necessarily agree that open source is a free product. There are always costs related to support, standardization, and compatibility."

– *Ganda Kusuma, Chief Information Officer, Astra International*

"There are fewer features in OpenOffice.org compared to Microsoft Office. It doesn't have programs functionally equivalent to Visio, it doesn't have Project, it doesn't have Outlook and it doesn't have OneNote. This is a significant loss for the end-user, who loses efficiency in his or her day-to-day routine. For us, this loss represents a significant cost, since it means that we must have more employees to do the same tasks." *Jorge Ferreira, IT Director, Nanium*

For more information on what you miss when you select an alternative to Microsoft Office go to: www.whymicrosoft.com



School District Scraps Open-Source Solution, Boosts Productivity by 50 Percent

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Forsyth County Schools has 4,500 employees and serves more than 35,000 students at 35 elementary, middle, and high schools; at additional alternative and charter schools; and in special programs.

Business Situation

After replacing a longtime Microsoft Office installation with OpenOffice, the district struggled with compatibility problems that hindered productivity.

Solution

Forsyth County Schools decided to return to a Microsoft Office roadmap, with an immediate deployment of Microsoft Office 2007 and plans for a subsequent deployment of Microsoft Office 2010.

Benefits

- Personal productivity up by 50 percent
- Optimal use of applications and databases
- Efficient working environment
- Powerful positioning for the future

"When we returned to Microsoft Office after our experience with OpenOffice, you could practically hear a collective sigh of relief, across the entire district."

Bailey Mitchell, Chief Information Officer, Forsyth County Schools

Forsyth County Schools serves a rapidly growing student population near Atlanta, Georgia, with a longtime commitment to academic and technology innovation. Facing tightened budgets in late 2008, the district decided to move away from its longtime use of Microsoft Office and deploy OpenOffice to some 20,000 computers, but with this deployment a number of compatibility problems stymied productivity. After just over a year, the district returned to Microsoft Office, with an initial deployment of Microsoft Office 2007 as a transition step in a larger move to Microsoft Office 2010. Now, tasks that took hours in OpenOffice are completed in just minutes, teachers are making optimal use of a powerful learning management system, administrators are doing the same with line-of-business applications and databases, and students are working more efficiently in and out of the classroom.

"Teachers were eager to convert some key content and learning activities for use in the [learning management] system, but performance and compatibility issues frustrated their efforts. With OpenOffice, we had thrown a monkey wrench into the process."

Bailey Mitchell, Chief Information Officer,
Forsyth County Schools

Situation

Forsyth County Schools educates more than 35,000 students in a 413-square-mile area roughly 30 miles north of Atlanta, Georgia. While serving a rapidly expanding student population in one of the fastest-growing counties in the United States, the district has earned accolades as a state and national leader in academics. For example, numerous schools in the district have been named among the "Georgia Schools of Excellence" by the state's Department of Education, and in 2010 one of the district's high schools was included in Newsweek magazine's "Top of the Class" list of some 1,600 high schools throughout the United States.

Forsyth County Schools also has earned multiple state and national awards for its leadership in technology innovation, including a 2010 "Investing in Innovation" grant from the U.S. Department of Education, recognizing the district's pioneering use of information technology to support collaboration in the classroom and beyond. Since 2005, all Forsyth County Schools classrooms have used interactive whiteboards and web-based streaming audio and video applications to enhance the teaching of math, language arts, and other core subjects. Teachers rely on electronic portfolios to support group projects and track student progress, and share activities and assessments through an online repository of tools. Teachers also have access to a powerful learning management system implemented districtwide to further enhance creativity and collaboration.


Another component of the IT toolset at Forsyth County Schools is the Microsoft Office suite, which the district first used widely starting in the mid-1990s and continuing into late 2008. At that time, when the economic downturn increased

pressure to reduce licensing costs, the district took a different approach, with an initiative to implement an open-source solution. Through that initiative, the district replaced Office 2003 with OpenOffice software on some 20,000 computers at schools, district offices, and students' and teachers' homes.

Over time, however, that initiative failed to yield the desired results, according to Bailey Mitchell, Chief Information Officer, Forsyth County Schools. "Problems with compatibility, which barely registered during our pilot deployment, grew to enormous proportions once we deployed into production," he says. "Our power users could no longer easily open documents containing macros or specialized formatting, import forms with drop-down menus, or produce content for our learning management system. They were delayed or prevented from performing business-intelligence analyses using data from our student information system, opening data files from the state's department of education and external agencies, or doing almost anything that involved HTML or XLS files. The problems just went on and on."

As a result, productivity plummeted, and not just among power users. "Students, teachers, administrators, and support staff across the board, from financial analysts to bus-route schedulers, wasted time and effort trying to use OpenOffice in our environment," Mitchell says. "People were spending 30 to 50 percent more time than they had in the past to create and modify documents—activities that constitute the staple of the work or school day."

These productivity problems were especially troublesome because around the same time that Forsyth County Schools moved to OpenOffice, the district also was ramping up use of its learning



"I am accomplishing a wide range of tasks... in just minutes, instead of the hours these tasks sometimes took in OpenOffice. Considering that I'm just one of thousands of users throughout the district, that's a productivity gain that is hard to fathom."

Jeff Hunt, Principal, North Middle School

management system to better engage students with a blend of traditional classroom content and online instructional materials. "Teachers were eager to convert some key content and learning activities for use in the online system, but performance and compatibility issues frustrated their efforts," Mitchell says. "With OpenOffice, we had thrown a monkey wrench into the process."

Yet another problem affected students who were trying to complete assignments on their home computers—a problem that troubled their parents as well. "After watching their child struggle in OpenOffice to access otherwise familiar documents, parents would express their frustration to the teachers, who relayed these grievances to the principals," according to Jeff Hunt, Principal, North Middle School. "Dissatisfaction with OpenOffice was everywhere."

Solution

After meeting with Hunt and more than 30 other principals over the course of a year, Mitchell and his team decided it was time to move Forsyth County Schools back to the Microsoft Office suite. In addition to their desire to eliminate the compatibility problems surrounding OpenOffice, Mitchell and his colleagues were motivated by what they were learning about the newest release of Microsoft Office, Microsoft Office 2010. "We especially liked the Web Apps capability of Office 2010, because we were moving rapidly in the direction of making everything we do web-facing," Mitchell says. "We also were intrigued by the rich-content authoring tools, particularly the in-presentation video-editing capabilities of PowerPoint 2010, because video plays an important role in our interactive whiteboard solution."

In early 2010, Mitchell and his team presented their case to the district board. "Because board members had heard the same arguments already from teachers, principals, administrators, parents, just about everyone, their response was overwhelmingly positive," Mitchell says. "And for their part, the principals were so excited to be moving back to Microsoft Office that they reached into their own activity accounts to purchase licenses for their teachers, while the district set out to cover the costs for students and staff."

That left only the question of which Microsoft Office release to deploy. Mitchell explains that as much as he and others were eager to put new Office 2010 capabilities to use, matters of timing and urgency required a slightly different approach. "At the time, the release of Office 2010 was some months in the future," he explains. "Considering our funding and hardware-refresh cycles, and the growing excitement surrounding the move, we decided to go ahead with a deployment of Microsoft Office 2007 and plan for an upgrade to Office 2010."

In a four-month period preceding the opening of the 2010 school year, a three-person team from the district's office of technology services, assisted by site-based technology specialists, replaced OpenOffice with Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2007 on every one of the more than 20,000 computers installed at 35 schools and four administrative sites. Team members used the Altiris Deployment Solution from Symantec to expedite the project, and through the learning management system they provided links to free* online training tools from Microsoft for users who wanted help with the Ribbon, part of the Microsoft Office Fluent interface.

"Because sorting, formatting, and table and chart creation are more powerful and more intuitive in Office 2007 than in earlier versions of the software, my own overall productivity is up by 50 percent."

Sue Derison, Director of Information Systems, Forsyth County Schools

As it turns out, very little training was necessary for Forsyth County Schools users. "It was such a pleasure to have Microsoft Office back on my desk that I was happy to use the resources embedded in the toolset and among my peer network to learn the Ribbon," says Hunt, whose experience appears to be common. "With OpenOffice, we provided every user 10 to 12 hours of formal training, and still had problems," Mitchell says. "But with our return to Microsoft Office, no one has expressed a need for any formal training."

As for the next step in the process, the district will work toward its deployment of Microsoft Office 2010, a project that will include deployment of Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 and adoption of the Microsoft Live@edu hosted communication and collaboration services. Mitchell says that he and his colleagues are excited about what all this will mean for Forsyth County Schools. "We'll be using the rich-content authoring capabilities of Office 2010 to streamline our ongoing migration from textbooks to a predominantly online environment, as well as the enhanced data-visualization features of Excel 2010 to optimize the output of our performance and accounting systems," Mitchell says. "We'll also use the Live@edu offerings to further our goal of using the software-as-a-service hosting model to enhance the classroom experience."

Benefits


"When we returned to Microsoft Office after our experience with OpenOffice, you could practically hear a collective sigh of relief, across the entire district," Mitchell says. And with good reason, because Forsyth County Schools teachers, administrators, principals, and students are reporting significant gains in productivity and are making better use of IT resources in general. In addition, teachers and

students are working more efficiently in the classroom and on their home computers, graduating seniors are better prepared for the world of work or college, and the district itself is better able to continue its tradition of technology innovation.

Boosting Productivity by 50 Percent

With Microsoft Office back on their desktop and laptop computers, students, teachers, and staff throughout Forsyth County Schools are once again devoting their time and talents to getting work done—instead of struggling with files that won't open, forms that won't work, and figures that won't compute. "Even while learning the new Ribbon user interface, I am accomplishing a wide range of tasks—from formatting a text document to disaggregating districtwide student test data—in just minutes, instead of the hours these tasks sometimes took in OpenOffice," Hunt says. "Considering that I'm just one of thousands of users throughout the district, that's a productivity gain that is hard to fathom."

Perhaps nowhere is the productivity gain of Microsoft Office more apparent than among power users like Sue Derison, Director of Information Systems, Forsyth County Schools, and her counterparts in finance, accounting, and human resources who work extensively with Microsoft Excel spreadsheet software. "Office Excel 2007 is an awesome product," Derison says. "Because we no longer struggle with the compatibility problems of OpenOffice, importing, exporting, and analyzing data is one-third faster than in that environment. Moreover, because sorting, formatting, and table and chart creation are more powerful and more intuitive in Office 2007 than in earlier versions of the software, my own overall productivity is up by 50 percent."



"Once we have installed Office 2010, students, teachers, administrators, and other staff members will take advantage of the 'anytime, anywhere' access of Office 2010 that aligns so well with our learning environment."

Bailey Mitchell, Chief Information Officer,
Forsyth County Schools

Optimizing Technology Resources

With the move to Microsoft Office, Forsyth County Schools administrators and other staff are also making the most of the comprehensive data and IT resources available to them. "We have a treasure trove of data in our systems for accounting, human resources, student information, transportation, warehousing inventory, food planning, services, and more, but with OpenOffice we couldn't take full advantage of the intelligence bound up in that data," Derison says. "In contrast, with Microsoft Office we can import and export the data seamlessly, and with Office Excel we can easily perform the kind of analyses we need for implementing initiatives that will help the district to keep student achievement at high levels."

For teachers, the deployment of Microsoft Office is helping to open up what Mitchell calls the "transformational" possibilities of the learning management system.

"Teachers are converting paper-based course content for use in the new system without the incompatibility delays of before," he explains. "They are back on track with our migration of the classroom from a largely paper-based environment to one that is mostly online."

Having Microsoft Office back on Forsyth County Schools computers also is making a difference outside the classroom, for students working on their home computers, as almost all of them do. "Parents who used to watch their child struggle for minutes just to open a document in OpenOffice are now are seeing their child open the same document in just seconds," Mitchell says. "These parents are thanking us for making it so much easier for their son or daughter to complete assignments at home."

Positioning for the Future

Now that the Microsoft Office suite is once again an integral part of the Forsyth County Schools technology roadmap, Mitchell is optimistic about what lies ahead. "With Microsoft Office, students are using the desktop productivity toolset they are most likely to encounter in higher education and the workplace, so they are better prepared for their future," he says. "And once we have installed Office 2010, students, teachers, administrators, and other staff members will take advantage of the 'anytime, anywhere' access of Office 2010 that aligns so well with our learning environment."

*Access to and use of the Internet may require payment of a separate fee to an Internet service provider. Local and/or long-distance telephone charges may apply.

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