



The Commission on Higher Education in the Philippines migrates to Google Apps for Edu, posting an increase of 166% in clients served.



At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Improve the Commission's email system to communicate effectively both externally and internally without tremendous cost to the taxpayers
- Find a solution to communication problems that could be quickly and easily deployed

What they did

- Migrated all central office employees to Gmail with a process of deployment lasting only 6 days

What they accomplished

- Saved the recurring monthly cost of 15000 pesos to maintain the old system and dedicated the money to supporting projects like the e-Library
- Recorded an increase of 94% in clients served, corresponding to greater efficacy and reliability

Institution

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines is responsible for serving a total of 2,247 higher education institutions including state, local and private colleges and universities. CHED operates out of one central office and 16 regional offices, with around 700 employees. The commission's vision is to set high and attainable standards for Philippine education and to boost the innovation and prowess of the country's graduates through various channels of support.

Challenge

It had been difficult for CHED to fulfill its mandate and effectively support all 2,247 institutions, due to the inadequacy of its internal communication system. CHED's email server had an incredibly low capacity and ineffectual security. The previous system used 'greylisting' to protect against spam, which caused important national and international correspondence to bounce back to the sender, calling into question CHED's efficacy and reliability as a governing institution. CHED employees were turning to personal email addresses for greater storage and better security, but with no standard domain, internal communication between the offices was impaired. In March of 2012 the situation came to a head when CHED's ISP shut off their internet. Unable to access their website, email or internal systems, CHED officials realized how dependent they were on a functioning IT system. To add to the crisis, when the contracts of employees responsible for managing CHED's IT systems could not be renewed, CHED was left with virtually zero IT support.

"The deployment process was very easy and with this quality of technology free of cost, it was a simple choice to go Google."
—Charlie Calimlim, Chief, Information and Publication Division (IPD), Office of Policy, Planning, Research and Information (OPPRI), Commission on Higher Education (CHED)

Solution

At this critical moment, the IT director at the University of the Philippines reached out to CHED with a recommendation for Google Apps for Education. UP had begun using Google Apps for Edu and was pleased with the outcome. Their IT staff met with key decision makers at CHED and presented the differences between Google's products and the current CHED IT infrastructure. CHED is entirely funded by taxpayer money, and the fact that the Google Apps for Edu suite was free of cost made it an appealing prospect. Charlie Calimlim, Chief of the Information and Publication Division, cited many reasons for the decision to go Google, among which were more storage capacity, better security and a friendlier user interface. Google Apps for Education were easy to use and needed virtually no IT maintenance, saving the Commission the cost of hiring more personnel.

About Google Apps for Education

Google Apps for Education is a free suite of hosted communication and collaboration applications designed for schools and universities. Google Apps includes Gmail (webmail services), Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Docs (online document, spreadsheet, presentation, and form creation and sharing) Google Video (secure and private video sharing – 10GB free) and Google Sites (team website creation with videos, images, gadgets and documents integration), as well as administrative tools, customer support, and access to APIs to integrate Google Apps with existing IT systems.

For more information visit
www.google.com/apps/edu

*“The new system [Google Apps for Education] is very simple, easy to use and user friendly”
“easier and faster service and access.”
—Survey Respondents, CHED employees,
a survey conducted in the regional offices
after deployment*

The entire deployment process was completed in a mere 6 days, compared to the one month it took to deploy the previous CHED system. With the help of the IT team from UP, the Commission configured their system for the new email service. Google provided CHED with a 1,000 user domain account, enough to migrate all employee email addresses with room for growth. Mr. Armand Zabala from UP was responsible for the deployment. He created aliases like docs.ched.gov.ph and mail.ched.gov.ph and held discussions and trainings for key CHED personnel to understand how to use the new products.

Benefits

CHED was able to enjoy benefits of switching to Google Apps for Education immediately after deployment. In a mere 6 days, they had an effective way to relay information between the central and regional offices, allowing for more collaboration. From January to February 2012 before deployment, the OPPRI-IPD of CHED only fielded 500 queries from clients and dealt with many more complaints about emails bouncing back and responses being slow. After migrating to Google Apps for Education, OPPRI-IPD was able to record an increase of 166% in clients served, fielding 1330 requests from May to June. The feedback from employees and from clients was very positive.

Whereas the old system cost 110 thousand pesos to set up and another PhP 5000 per month to maintain, CHED was able to save the full amount and to reallocate funds and resources to support projects immediately beneficial to higher education in the Philippines.

For instance, the funds saved by switching email systems were largely dedicated to the E-Library project, an online resource that makes information freely available for students throughout the Philippines to browse and study. Internally, CHED was able to use the saved money and resources to digitize more of their information making it more accessible to users, and to improve their website.

Overall, the Commission saved money and resources while progressing towards their vision of the highest standards for Philippine higher education.

