Company Name: **Ash Creek Enterprises, Inc.**

Services Offered: **Network and Server Integration, Managed Services/Remote Monitoring and Management, VoIP, CIO/CTO Outsourcing**

AVG Managed Workplace® Partner Since: **2009**

Website: **www.ashcreek.com**

As part of its IT solutions offering, Ash Creek Enterprises delivers responsive, proactive managed services to help local schools embrace new technologies in the classroom.

Education Embraces Technology

"No more pencils, no more books." Technology is dramatically transforming today's classroom, with school boards and educational institutions looking for new ways to deliver innovative, more engaging learning experiences for students. Today, pencils and books are being increasingly replaced by interactive whiteboards networked with laptops, tablets and e-readers. Tools such as video conferencing and Skype are connecting collaborating classrooms and outside experts. Schools are also using technology to connect with parents on a more frequent basis, with Facebook postings and classroom blogs replacing old-fashioned, expensive printed newsletters.

Even "Bring Your Own Device", or BYOD, is reaching the classroom. While employees in the corporate world are increasingly relying on personal mobile devices in the workplace, a school board in southern Ontario is piloting a BYOD initiative in which students can bring their own smartphones and tablets into the classroom if they are using them to learn. Technology is a critical and growing part of learning and teaching in today's classroom. In a survey conducted in January 2013, PBS Learning Media asked pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers in the United States how they incorporate technology into education.

- Close to three-quarters of teachers said they use digital resources – for example tablets, PCs and laptops – in the classroom

- Ninety percent of teachers have access to at least one PC or laptop for their classrooms, and six in 10 teachers have access to an interactive whiteboard

Challenge

As part of its professional services support, Ash Creek Enterprises is helping local schools and school boards manage technology transformations in the classroom. This includes IT infrastructure refresh programs backed by ongoing managed services support to ensure educators can take full advantage of new IT tools and resources.

Partner Profile

Ash Creek Enterprises has been in the technology business since 1999. The company's clients range from micro-sized businesses to large enterprises, to clients with no onsite support, to clients with full IT support teams. A particular specialty is assisting existing IT departments with high-value and/or niche projects; the professional services firm specializes in network and server integration complemented by a very strong ongoing support focus.

Solution

Ash Creek Enterprises adopted the AVG Managed Workplace remote monitoring and management (RMM) platform to help educational institutions solve issues concerning usability, accessibility, maintenance and security with new technology deployments.

Benefits

Ash Creek Enterprises uses AVG Managed Workplace across its broad customer base. Partnering with AVG Managed Workplace, the IT service provider has been able to realize a significant return on investment with improved customer satisfaction and new managed services business opportunities.

- Increased professional services and managed services sales
- Improved operational efficiency through increased remote monitoring and a reduction of onsite visits
- Enhanced visibility into end-clients' network and IT assets has helped ensure proactive support and resolution
- Tablets and e-readers saw the biggest increase among technology platforms available for classroom instruction. More than one-third of teachers said they have access to a tablet or e-reader in their classroom, up from 20% the year before

"Five years ago a school may have had one or two portable smart boards shared among classrooms; today there's a smart board in almost every room."

Mark Calzone, President, Ash Creek Enterprises

Navigating Technology Transformation

While the classroom embraces new digital tools and resources, a school or school board may struggle with the complexity of new technology, usability and accessibility, maintenance and security. Helping school boards navigate and manage technology transformation is a specialty of Ash Creek Enterprises, Inc., an IT professional services firm with expertise in network integration and proactive managed services based in Stratford, Connecticut. Founded in 1999, Ash Creek Enterprises has evolved from providing IT support for micro-business and home-based clients to primarily serving as a senior IT consultant for small and medium-sized business as well as leading specialized professional services projects for enterprise clients. The company has realized yearly revenue growth, in part due to its broad end-market focus. Today, the private education market represents about 30% of annual sales, with Ash Creek Enterprises providing a mix of professional services and managed services for 12 schools and school boards with multiple locations.

"Private schools are increasingly using technology in the classroom as a key differentiator as they market themselves to prospective students and their parents," explains Mark Calzone, President of Ash Creek Enterprises.

"In the past few years we're seeing a tremendous increase in the amount of technology in the classroom. There are more tablets and laptops, curriculum based on learning on mobile devices, and a focus on interactivity and connectivity. Five years ago a school may have had one or two portable smart boards shared among classrooms; today there's a smart board in almost every room." As reliance on technology in the classroom has increased, Ash Creek Enterprises focused on building a consultative partnership with its education end-clients. One key challenge is technology adds more maintenance, upgrade and connectivity issues for already overburdened teaching staff that may be under-prepared to address IT related concerns. Depending on the size of the school, Ash Creek Enterprises may be working with a Technical Coordinator, typically a teacher with responsibility for integrating technology into curriculum, or a small IT staff.

'Virtual CTO' for Education Clients

"We often become a 'virtual CTO' and provide end-to-end IT support for many clients in the education market," said Calzone. "Often these projects start with a network upgrade, where we'll be responsible for purchasing equipment and the installation and integration. We'll then move into a managed services role, where we may have a person onsite complemented by 24/7 monitoring through AVG Managed Workplace. "Typically, we'll deliver a mix of professional services billed hourly, monthly recurring revenue based on providing managed services and monitoring, and then other services such as spam filtering and offsite backup" For example, Ash Creek Enterprises recently completed a major network refresh for a long-term client. Work included replacing all core network infrastructure, installing faster wired Internet connections across all classrooms, new firewalls and content filtering solutions to enhance security, and improved Wi-Fi as additional iPad and laptop based learning is integrated into the curriculum. This summer Ash Creek Enterprises will be leading the next stage of the upgrade, with an updated media center to enable video conferencing and distance learning initiatives.

Our school underwent a major technology upgrade with a new server, wireless capability and new desktops for our teachers. Ash Creek Enterprises walked us through the process from beginning to end and we couldn't be more grateful. Thank you for helping to make St. Catherine of Siena a school ready for the challenges and opportunities technology can bring to education.

Patrice Kopas, Interim Principal, St. Catherine of Siena School

End-To-End IT Management

Deploying AVG Managed Workplace, Ash Creek Enterprises provides complete monitoring and management of the school's end-to-end IT infrastructure. As a result, the IT firm has reduced the time staff is required to be onsite, and can focus its technical resources on higher margin, value-added professional services projects.

"With AVG Managed Workplace we can do a lot more remotely across all sites. For example, software updates can be done from our office for all devices at the school. We can also deliver much more proactive support for our clients. We can track warranty renewals and set specific monitoring and management rules for aging or out-of-date equipment. With the platform's alerting capabilities, we're often able to catch problems before they happen, or if there is an issue we can have services back up-and-running without impacting end-users," said Calzone. In addition, the comprehensive reporting capabilities of AVG Managed Workplace add new strategic business value for Ash Creek Enterprises. With detailed reports, the IT services firm can clearly and easily explain the value of services, resource utilization and opportunities to further improve service.

Growing Opportunity For Managed Services

Focusing on delivering a strong combination of professional services and remote monitoring and management has allowed Ash Creek Enterprises to deliver more efficient, cost-effective and an expanded offering to a growing number of clients in the education market. For other managed service providers (MSPs) considering opportunities in the education market, Calzone offers some advice.

"Particularly in education, our clients really want someone in a consultative role," he explains. "You have to think of yourself as a virtual CTO or business partner when working with schools. That means bringing different solutions to the table, outlining the pros and cons of various approaches, and helping enhance the technology capabilities within the school while also focusing on cost-savings. It has to be far more than just selling a service." The education market represents a significant growth opportunity for MSPs ready to adopt a more consultative business approach. According to Calzone, schools are typically refreshing and upgrading technology on a regular cycle, especially as IT resources, capabilities and access are used to attract students. In the coming years, Ash Creek Enterprises expects to be helping its education-based clients integrate, embrace and understand a wider range of technologies.

"The evolution of technology in the classroom is not slowing down," says Calzone. "Mobile device management will be used to push configuration and software updates to tablets in the classroom, or help enforce security as BYOD enters the classroom. There's going to be more emphasis on interactivity, distance learning and video conferencing, which adds more devices to the network. This is going to place more emphasis on AVG Managed Workplace as a key technology that we can rely on to proactively, cost-effectively and efficiently manage IT complexity."

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Mark Calzone, President, Ash Creek Enterprises

About AVG Managed Workplace

AVG Managed Workplace is a remote monitoring and management software and services platform used by thousands of IT service providers around the world to deliver comprehensive IT support to small and mid-sized businesses. AVG Managed Workplace's extensive management and automation features, deep integration into the IT ecosystem and fully integrated white label NOC and Help Desk services allow IT services providers to remotely support all of the IT products and services their end customers rely on from a single web-based dashboard.

See All. Manage All. Service All.

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