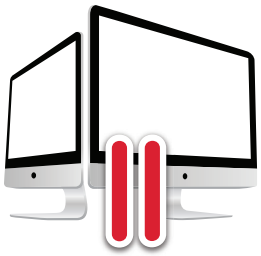
CASE STUDY



The American School in Japan Relies on Parallels Desktop® for Mac Business Edition for its Mac-only Environment

Established in 1902, The American School in Japan (ASIJ) is one of the world's leading international schools with about 1,535 students from 40 countries at its main campus in Chofu and an Early Learning Center in Roppongi, Tokyo. With more than 150 staff, the school offers diverse curricular and cocurricular programs.

ASIJ is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Around three-quarters of graduates matriculate at colleges in the US, with most of the remaining quarter matriculating in Canada, the UK, Australia, and Japan.

Notable alumni include former US Ambassador to Japan Edwin Reischauer, Academy Award–winning actress Joan Fontaine, and Kaz Hirai, president and CEO of Sony Corporation.

Operational Situation Summary

- A seven-person IT team supports more than 1,500 machines in a school that uses Apple devices almost exclusively.
- Some staff in the technology, communications, and administrative departments use iMac devices and are required to access several key Windows-only applications from Blackbaud for the administration and fundraising database

Solutions Summary

- ASIJ deployed Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition on the iMac devices of more than 40 staff.
- The Parallels environment is wire-based and separate from the school's wireless Internet network to reinforce security.

Benefits Summary

- Staff members find using Parallels simple and seamless.
- The school saves around US$24,000 every three years from not having to buy Wintel hardware.
- The IT team finds it easy to manage the Parallels licenses and likes being able to experiment with different VMs.

Parallels Products Used

- Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition

Computing Environment

ASIJ has long been an early adopter of information technology as a vital learning tool. The school first deployed personal computers in the mid-1980s. It was one of the first schools in Japan to hook up to the Internet, as part of a Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) pilot program in the early 1990s.

ASIJ is virtually a Macintosh®-run institution with a wireless environment running on an open network, making it easy for students to go directly online. It has about 40 staff using business-critical Windows® administrative and database applications through a separate, wire-based Parallels environment that ensures everything "just works."

According to Josh Raub, manager of IT services at ASIJ, the school took that approach because it is highly committed to working with students through its Digital Citizenship Program. It believes that giving students access to information technology tools empowers them to be more imaginative and helps them make smart choices.

All sixth through 12th grade students bring in their own Apple® MacBook Pro® and MacBook Air® computers and all second through fifth graders bring their own iPad® devices. Even preschoolers use an iPad. Most faculty members use MacBook Pro and iMac® devices; a few accounting staffers only run Windows PCs, largely for legacy application reasons.

Challenges

ASIJ may be a predominantly Mac®-driven institution, but around 40 technical, communications, and secretarial staff using iMac devices must access several key Windows-based applications from Blackbaud® that are a gold standard for schools and nonprofit organizations. One of those users is Matt Wilce, the school's director of communications and annual support.

The Blackbaud applications he and colleagues run include Education Edge (EE), used for ASIJ's student information database. This software handles all aspects of administration, from admissions, attendance, and schedule data to health information, bus assignments, and cocurricular data. Another Windows offering from Blackbaud that ASIJ runs is Raiser's Edge (RE), a relationship management database, which the school uses for handling current family and alumni records, event registrations, and fundraising data.

ASIJ's website uses Blackbaud's NetCommunity content management system, which can pull information directly from both EE and RE. Surveys and mass emails to constituents are sent through the web interface, which connects to the Blackbaud databases. Raub says that because Blackbaud is very integrated with the Microsoft® technology stack, it is unlikely that Mac versions of the software will come out any time soon.

Solutions

Although recognizing the importance of the Windows platform for its staff's use, ASIJ was also keen to avoid the clutter and the additional cost associated with running and maintaining dual machines just to accommodate Blackbaud.

ASIJ chose Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition for its staff accessing EE and RE because their work requires them to switch between OS X® and Windows frequently. "Boot Camp® would have been impractical in that respect because of the reboot times," said Raub. "We also looked into VMware® but found Parallels easier to understand. We also liked that we could configure it the way we needed, and the quality is better; systems could run faster. Parallels integrated better with OS X."

Just as students get direct access to the Internet through the wireless network, the IT team configured the system to enable iMac-equipped staff to work wirelessly on the OS X platform but go through a separate, wired internal network when using Windows with the Parallels virtual machine (VM) for the Blackbaud database.

"One of the things we like about Parallels is that we have it set up so the Ethernet port is off for Mac OS X with the iMac—to their Mac, it doesn't exist—but within Parallels the Ethernet port is connected," said Raub. "That's a great feature because the two networks aren't touching each other, as we don't want the internal network to be accessible outside. We keep things seamless so people don't really know they're running two systems—Parallels Desktop for Mac Business Edition makes that happen."

Results

> "In the old days, I used to have two computers, the Mac for design and communications and a PC for accessing constituent information… Parallels makes your workflow so much easier because you're not switching devices. That's made a big difference to me."
>
> — Matt Wilce, Director of Communications & Annual Support

As one of the staff who constantly uses Blackbaud applications, Wilce loves the ease that Parallels has provided. "In the old days, I used to have two computers, the Mac for design and communications and a PC for accessing constituent information. I would tend to avoid using the PC to access the database and resort to calling out to someone to provide the information. That's because having to start up and log in just to look up a quick query was such a pain that I never did it," he said. "Parallels makes your workflow so much easier because you're not switching devices. That's made a big difference to me." His experience is echoed by the other Blackbaud users amongst his colleagues.

Although quality, rather than raw cost, was the overriding factor in choosing Parallels, Raub notes that Parallels saves ASIJ around US$24,000 every three years in hardware spending alone. But the other significant savings have been in time and frustration. "Parallels provides a nice, seamless experience without us users having to know what's going on in the background," added Wilce.

"We've been able to streamline a key part of the school administration because Parallels allows Windows to just get out of the way. And Parallels Desktop Business Edition has made it easy for the IT team to manage licenses and upgrades. We can play with different VMs and tweak them. Then all we have to do is copy the VM file to a new machine; we don't have to worry about the settings. It just works because Parallels takes care of drivers and configuration," concluded Raub.

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