

SUCCESS STORY: NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

A new image of efficiency

Customer profile:

Northern Michigan University (NMU), located in Marquette, Michigan, is a dynamic four-year, public, comprehensive university offering 147 degree programs, including 25 graduate programs. With 1,100 employees including over 300 fulltime faculty members, the University provides cutting-edge technology initiatives and nationally recognized academic programs to a population of about 9,000 undergraduate and graduate students. NMU is one of the largest notebook computer campuses in the United States, with all full-time students receiving either a Lenovo ThinkPad® or Apple MacBook as part of tuition. Students use their laptop during the four years they attend the University.

Increasing efficiency saves both time and money

According to Jeff Wommer, NMU's Sr. Systems Technologist, IT-Technical Services, in the past, the University created a custom student image and loaded it to a DVD. The DVD was then mass replicated with a copy provided to each new student during check-in. Each student then loaded the image onto their new laptop from their DVD. This was also done with each of the previous year's models.

To assist the students in loading their image, NMU created an instruction video that identified the necessary steps for students to take. During the entire check-in period, NMU's support staff was present to answer questions and resolve issues. The process would take between 45 to 75 minutes for the students to complete. Considering there might be between 2,000 to 4,000 ThinkPads distributed to new students, this was a very time consuming endeavor for students, their parents and NMU's support staff.

REVOLUTIONIZING AN OUTDATED PROCESS

Today, the University has a new process for handling its imaging process that saves tremendous time for students, their parents and support staff. By leveraging Lenovo's imaging capability, NMU has been able to reduce the time for NMU students to pick up their new, completely imaged, ThinkPad to less than ten minutes.

In working with Lenovo, Mr. Wommer now receives an "early production" ThinkPad where he works on creating the new image. Once created, he sends the image to Lenovo's Image Technology Center (ITC) where a Lenovo imaging engineer carefully verifies the image before sending it along to Lenovo manufacturing where the image is loaded onto each ThinkPad during production.

This ensures that the hardware works properly with all device drivers before being delivered to the students.

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JEFF WOMMER
Sr. Systems Technologist, IT-Technical Services,
Northern Michigan University

Optimizing Lenovo factory imaging capabilities saves valuable technician time

Mr. Wommer said, “It’s great to have the ITC certify the image as it’s another set of eyes to catch issues.”

According to Mr. Wommer, “working with the ITC is really a painless process”. First, he participated in a kickoff call with Lenovo’s project manager and ITC engineer. Following the meeting there were about a half-dozen emails between Jeff and the Lenovo team to verify information. Once the image was approved, the ITC engineer released the image to manufacturing to be loaded during assembly.

“Trying to handle the volume manually would be a nightmare for us. It was a no-brainer of a decision to load the image during the build process” said Mr. Wommer.

“We’re always pushing the time limit to get the machines ready in August for when the students arrive. Lenovo’s ITC helps us if we run into an issue with the image or injecting drivers.”

“Lenovo does their job and makes it easy for us. It just works and you can’t put a price tag on that!” concludes Mr. Wommer.

NMU is also a Lenovo Self Maintainer where they fix their PC’s in-house. Self Maintainers have a trained and certified IT staff that performs warranty repairs on Lenovo products that they own or lease. This enables them to significantly reduce downtime by avoiding sending machines away to the depot or waiting for an on-site technician.

Results in dollar savings

- DVD cost savings @ 95 cents each for 6,000 – 8,000
= \$7,600 saved
- Labor to burn images: 6,000+ DVD’s @ 5 minutes/each
= \$7,333* saved
- Time savings of 75 minutes/PC/4000 students = \$27 or
= \$108,000* saved
- Student / Parent / Staff time savings
= immeasurable savings
- Imaging error & rework elimination
= immeasurable savings
- Faster deployment by eliminating DVD distribution
= immeasurable savings

* Technician salary of \$22/hour

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