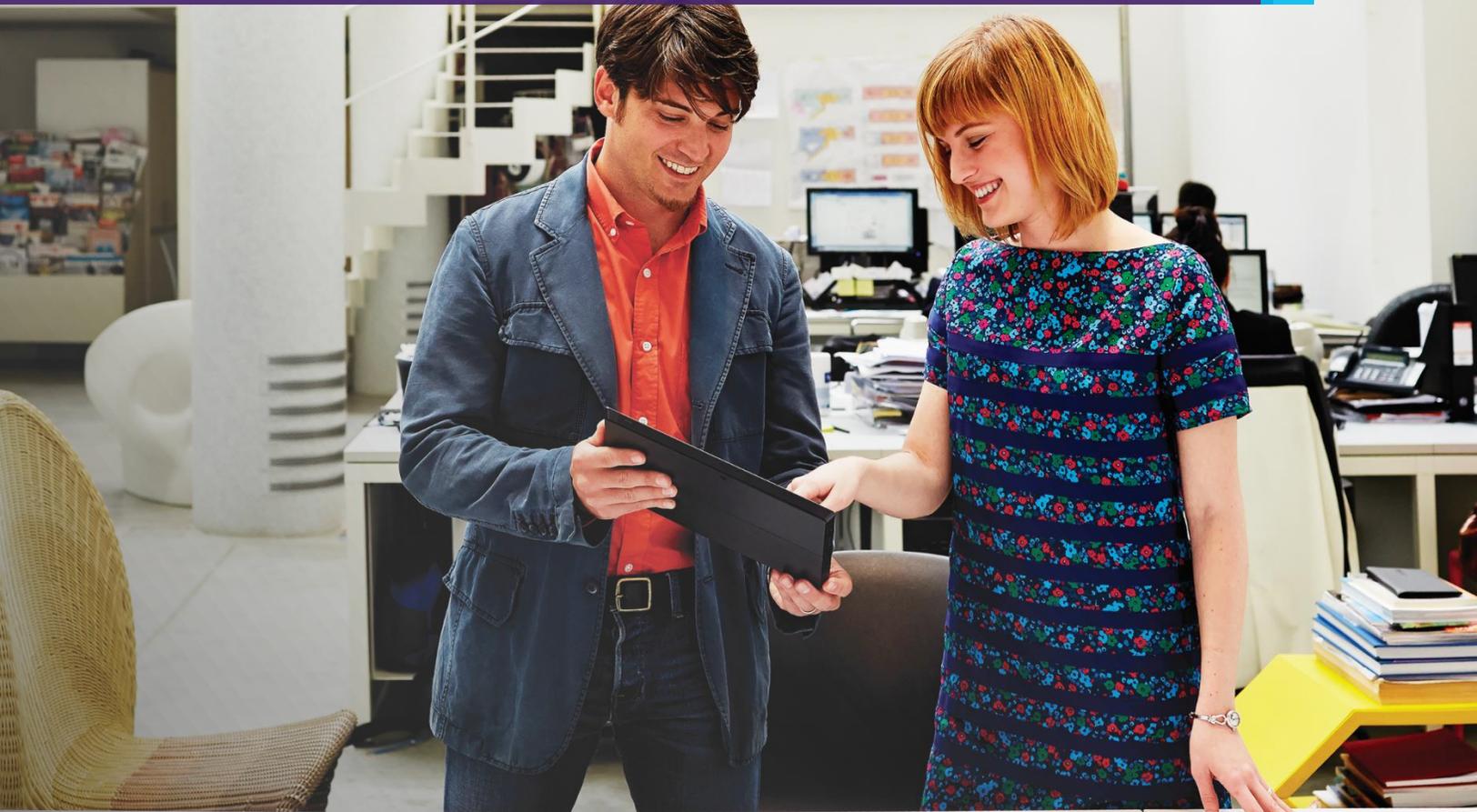




Oxford Computer Group Case Study

Enabling educators with the cloud



Microsoft
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Oxford Computer Group, a Microsoft Gold Partner based in Bothell, Washington, specializes in implementing identity and security solutions. As organizations continue to embrace cloud and mobile technologies, these solutions have become increasingly important. The modern enterprise must provide its workforce with secure access to the data and tools they need to do their jobs, wherever they might be.

In the education vertical, problems associated with identity and access are exacerbated by the sheer number of systems educators use day-to-day. For a teacher, time spent signing into 30 distinct portals is time taken away from lesson planning and designing curricula to give students the best opportunities to succeed. While there have never been more tools at a teacher's disposal, these tools can become burdens if they can't be accessed easily and securely.

The problem of juggling IT systems in the education vertical

Oxford Computer Group has worked with customers in education since 2003, with several hundred education engagements and millions of Office 365 seats deployed. OCG is well-acquainted with the unique pain points encountered in the industry. It is becoming increasingly clear that every student is unique and responds differently to various pedagogical methods. It has thus fallen on educators to craft differentiated learning plans tailored to meet the needs of their students. To do this, it is sometimes necessary to pull information from 30 to 40 different applications and systems, and pull appropriate data from each.

YES Prep, a charter school based in Houston, Texas, realized it could no longer pass this administrative burden on to its educators and limited IT staff. YES Prep's CIO, Richard Charlesworth encountered these issues working for the education department in Tennessee, where teachers had an average of 16 systems they needed to log into over the course of a given day. Charlesworth understood that YES Prep needed to move away from using a myriad of on-premises systems and adopt a modern, cloud-based approach that could be enabled with single sign-on from one pane of glass.

"[Charlesworth] recognized early that teachers wasted a tremendous amount of time dealing with passwords, logging into systems, and doing basic maintenance. He wanted teachers spending more time teaching and less time finding data. He also wanted to take the data from these disparate systems and build a single pane of glass educators could use to measure every aspect of a given student that the teacher was entitled to view," said Steve Brugger, President, Oxford Computer Group.

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– Richard Charlesworth , CIO, Yes Prep



Implementing a holistic, cloud-based vision

YES Prep called in Oxford Computer Group (OCG) to help it create an elegant identity access and management solution that would give teachers single-sign-on (SSO) access to all applications and set the groundwork for Charlesworth's single pane of glass vision for teachers, all while maintaining federal and state student data privacy requirements. Charlesworth was familiar with OCG already, as it had helped him create a similar solution at a previous employer.

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When Oxford Computer Group started work with the customer, the agenda was clear—the school wanted to adopt a cloud-first mentality.

"In K-12 education, the days of on-premises systems are numbered. Given their IT budgets, the typical district simply can't manage the complexities and security concerns associated with maintaining all of these systems. By contrast, much of that complexity can be pulled into the cloud and handled behind the scenes—it is just far easier to develop a single pane of glass view in a cloud environment," said Steve Brugger, President, Oxford Computer Group.

OCG began pulling in each of the school's systems to check whether they were cloud-based, and replaced on-premises systems

when necessary. OCG then implemented single sign-on using Azure Active Directory Federation Services (ADFS) to consolidate logins to the various systems. Ultimately, OCG was able to provide the Single Sign-On experience YES Prep was looking for while positioning itself to add more value in managed services over the course of the contract.

"Using Oxford Computer Group's Managed Services, YES Prep Public Schools has been able to rapidly deploy a Single Sign-On (SSO) solution using the Microsoft Identity stack," said Troy Neal, Senior Director of Information Technology at YES Prep Public Schools. "OCG was able to help us scale and set up SSO using ADFS or Azure AD for all current applications. It also helped create a technical document that allows YES Prep to identify identity solutions as we continue to grow our application portfolio. Overall, we've been able to accomplish more and reach our IT goals faster because of OCG's managed services."

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Turning a successful engagement into a long-term partnership

Building on its initial success implementing YES Prep's SSO solution, OCG has continued to plug in with the customer via its managed service engagement, discovering new opportunities to add value to YES Prep. As just one example, OCG was able to identify a potential gap in YES Prep's security posture and implement a solution to address it.

"In the education vertical, they are especially vulnerable to threats that come by way of phishing attacks. We partnered with Microsoft to develop our Phish Net solution, which we implemented to help YES Prep fight against

compromised accounts in Azure Active Directory," said Steve Brugger, President, Oxford Computer Group.

This is just a single instance of the value OCG has been able to add over time for YES Prep through its managed services and it underscores the value of these services in promoting lasting partnerships between organizations.

As Troy Neal, Senior Director of Information Technology for YES Prep Public Schools stated, "OCG has become a true partner with YES Prep Public Schools. It is vested in our goals and propose solutions to help us meet our mission."

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