HP customer case study: The Centre for Excellence in Computer Games Education at The University of Abertay Dundee selects HP to provide the latest, highest performance workstations

Industry: Higher education

The University of Abertay Dundee and HP join forces to create world leading Centre for Excellence in Computer Games Education

"HP has provided us with the hardware to ensure the Centre for Excellence can fulfil its ambitions to be the leading games development educational facility in the country and can equip our students with the skills needed to succeed in a competitive industry." Dr Henry Fortuna, director of Learning and Teaching, Institute of Arts, Media and Computer Games, University of Abertay, Dundee

Objective:

The University of Abertay Dundee wanted to create a World-leading Centre for Excellence in Computer Games Education that could offer its students the best performing hardware and the most up-to-date applications.

Approach:

The University worked with HP to design 40 customised workstations with the highest specifications that could handle the processor and graphics intensive demands of modern games development software.

IT improvements:

- The new workstations are the best performing on the entire campus and can easily cope with a range of demanding applications.
- The workstations are so robust and reliable that there are no operational issues.

Business benefits:

- The Centre for Excellence attracts the best students in the country.
- Local games development studios also make use of the HP workstations to optimise their in-development games thus creating strong bonds with the industry and creating job opportunities for students.

The University of Abertay, located in Dundee, Scotland, is recognised as a world leader in computer games and interactive media courses and has been at the forefront of games education and research for over a decade. It also has some of the most innovative and well-designed buildings in the UK that have set the standard for universities nationwide.

Maintaining World-leading standards

To continue in this tradition of leading-edge facilities and World-class games research, the University decided to invest in a new, dedicated Centre for Excellence in Computer Games Education, backed by £3m from the Scottish Government. The Centre for Excellence is expanding the range of graduates from Abertay able to make immediate commercial impact and to drive the future success of the computer games and interactive industries within the national and global economies.

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

- Microsoft Visual Studio
- Microsoft Games Studio
- Maya 2010
- Emergent Gamebryo
- Sony PhyreEngine

Primary hardware

- HP Z400 Workstations
- HP LP 2475w TFT

HP Services

- Hardware support

"Dundee is recognised as one of the UK's most important games development hubs with several notable studios based here and Abertay has long provided the profession with well-educated graduates that fuel the industry," explains Dr Henry Fortuna, director of Learning and Teaching, Institute of Arts, Media and Computer Games, University of Abertay, Dundee. "However, it is imperative that our students stay ahead of the technology curve and are familiar with the latest games development software and hardware. That's why we made the decision to create the Centre for Excellence but, in order to make it a success, we needed to partner with a technology vendor that could supply leading edge workstations that provided the ultimate in performance at a reasonable price."

Combining price and performance for cutting edge capabilities

After assessing several companies, the University decided that HP offered the best performing technology at an affordable price. Together, they developed customised workstations that could cope with the heavy demands of modern games development software. Forty HP workstations, with quad-core processors, 6GB memory, top of the range nVidia graphics cards running 64 bit Vista professional, were built to meet the University's exacting standards. They were coupled with 24-inch high-definition monitors to best showcase the student's work.

"HP understood what we wanted to achieve and helped us to do so in a cost-effective, timely fashion," adds Fortuna. "The result is a suite of bespoke workstations that can cope with even the most demanding software. Given the ambitions of the Centre and our student's need to push the creative boundaries, it is fitting that it is equipped with the best technology the industry has to offer."

The best software for the best education

Students can now work with the most up-to-date software packages, including Microsoft Visual Studio and Games Studio, Maya 2010, Emergent Gamebryo and Sony PhyreEngine. The workstations have proved so robust in their first term of use, that not only do all these applications run smoothly but there have been no operational issues with any of the hardware.

"The workstations have proven an enormous hit with the students and not just the ones on the games development courses," comments Fortuna. "As the best performing machines on campus, other students often try to sneak into the Centre and make use of their advanced capabilities. We have also had a team from a World-renowned games studio based in Dundee come in to test and optimise the performance of some of their in-development games on our new HP platform."

Iain Smith is a post-graduate student undertaking a Masters degree in Professional Practice Games Development and was one of the first to try out the new HP workstations: "The new computers are a vast step-up from the previous platform. Previously, I would often prefer to work on my own laptop but these workstations outstrip anything I have ever worked on before. Furthermore, in the context of the Centre for Excellence and the new open plan working environment, the new technology helps boost student morale and also gives us a taste of what it will feel like to be working in the real World. I have no doubt that working on the HP platform will give me a genuine advantage when it comes to getting a job and will help equip me with the skills needed to become a cutting edge games designer."

The new Centre for Excellence has, in the space of just a few months, established itself as one of the leading games development teaching facilities in the country and is helping to attract the cream of Britain's students.

"The Centre is a massive selling point for the university and at its heart are the new HP workstations. Digital industries are critical to the economic and cultural well-being of the UK and we are delighted to be at the forefront, in partnership with HP," concludes Fortuna.

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