



Norwalk Public Schools Uses SyAM to Save Time and Money

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David Hopp
Director of Technology

Norwalk is a highly diverse community with just under 12,000 students who attend one of twelve elementary schools, four middle schools and three high schools. The Norwalk Public School’s technology department is responsible for managing the IT infrastructure for all 19 buildings and services for over 20,000 devices used by students, teachers, and administrative staff. Norwalk is the sixth largest school district in Connecticut.

For years Norwalk Public Schools used a power management system for their IT assets that someone built in the 1990’s. It was built under the Windows 95 operating system and had become obsolete. In March 2017 Mike Mazzariello, (SyAM Sales Rep) had a few conversations with David Hopp (Norwalk’s Director of Technology) about what SyAM could do for Norwalk in reducing power consumption. David gave Mike some power usage information and that allowed Mike to determine how much Norwalk could save from reduced consumption and how much could be subsidized by the power company.

Going Beyond Power Management

In addition to Power Management, Mike presented other application modules that were built in to SyAM, including Asset Management. Norwalk had been managing assets with an Access database for years, but it didn’t work well in Windows 7, and as Norwalk transitioned to Windows 10 it didn’t work at all.

David was also looking for something to manage Norwalk’s mobile devices. He looked at systems from some of the big names, like IBM’s MaaS360 and others but they were cost prohibitive. In a school district money is always tight. So, the systems David looked at were low-cost or no-cost, but the systems he found had very little functionality or were bundled with other applications that Norwalk did not want.

David says “When I looked at SyAM I saw that it was exactly what we needed. SyAM not only handled power management but included other applications that we needed. In total, we could get a system that would control all our machines, reduce power consumption, push software, manage assets, generate reports, manage mobile devices, include a ticketing system and save us a lot of time and money.”

David oversees Power Management and has direct reports that are responsible for Asset Management, Mobile Device Management (MDM) and Help Desk. In addition, the IT Team has three data people, eight technicians and one help desk coordinator.

Manage ALL Devices with SyAM's Asset Management

When new equipment is received, the IT team pushes the SyAM client software to the new devices. They are then added to the asset inventory database and become accessible to all the SyAM modules. With the SyAM Asset Management the team now has an accurate and complete database of all IT assets including device location, configuration, utilization, license renewals and maintenance schedule. David says, "If we wanted to create a list of devices that required an upgrade to a new software version, we would just go into the reporting feature, define and run the report, and say, 'Okay guys, these are the machines we need to upgrade.' That alone saves a huge amount of time."

Reduce Power Utilization with SyAM's Power Management

David talked with Mike and Nick (Nick Thickins, SyAM President) on how he wanted to manage power for the differing requirements that each type of user had. For example, students do not need access to IT resources past a certain hour, so their devices (PCs) are shut down at 5pm. Administration personnel who stay late have access until 7pm, and the custodians have their machines available until 11pm when the night shift ends. David said, "The Power Management application works great. We haven't had to make changes other than adding people who need remote access and need their computer on all the time. It's easy to go in and change their access or change their power settings so we don't shut them down."

Push or Remove Software on iPads and Chromebooks with SyAM's Mobile Device Management

With the MDM module, David can manage the way apps are controlled on Norwalk's iOS devices. He says, "It's not so much of a money deal as it is more of us being able to manage what our teachers and students are able to put on their devices. With SyAM's MDM we have eliminated rogue programs that take up memory or are inappropriate for the students."

Norwalk is at a 1:1 ratio of student to Chromebook, meaning that the IT department is providing services and support to nearly 12,000 students. High school students may take their Chromebooks home; elementary students may not. SyAM tightly integrates with Google's APIs which provides real-time Chromebook management data in the Asset Dashboard. In addition to asset data, SyAM enables key Chromebook data to be updated from within its interface, saving technician's time. The MDM integration of iOS and Chromebook devices rounds out SyAM's unified device management technology.

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Reduce Mistakes in Ticket Entry with SyAM's Self-Serve Help Desk Integrated with Asset Management

David, with the help of SyAM, tailored the help desk self-serve portal to make it easy for people to input pertinent information and, more importantly, prevent them from entering choices that don't make sense. The help desk, integrated with SyAM's Asset Management, reduces mistakes in ticket entry, improves the routing of tickets to the proper technician and provides real-time tracking from ticket entry to resolution.

“The SyAM Power Audit showed that by using SyAM for power management Norwalk could save more than \$60,000 each year.”

Before implementing SyAM's help desk, Norwalk was paying for an antiquated ticketing system. By replacing that system with SyAM's help desk, Norwalk realized additional cost savings. In fact, the savings from the old ticketing system alone was nearly half the annual cost for the total SyAM system.

Working with the SyAM people

David says, “Working with the SyAM people is great. I met Nick before we implemented and I, or the guys on my team, can reach out to Nick directly. When we send him an email, he gets right back to us. Additionally, Nick and Mike have been down here a few times to help us out by walking through different scenarios to get things going.”

David reports, “I've worked with different vendors for years. They show up all the time because they want to sell us stuff. But Nick actually owns SyAM so he shows up to help us out. For example, he lent us an iPad and said, ‘use it to test with. I'll come back and get it next time I'm down.’ You don't see service like that often. This guy is in charge and provides us with service that goes above and beyond my expectations.”

Saving Time and Saving Money

David says, “Time savings is the big benefit because everybody's time is precious. We have such a small team for the thousands of pieces of software and devices. We now have the SyAM system to manage these things.”

“We've been very successful with SyAM. We're doing great and I have no issues. I haven't yet put a cost savings report together officially, but I know that we're saving a lot of money with SyAM. We are able to do all these the SyAM applications better and with less people.”

Recommendation

Would David recommend SyAM to other school districts? “I certainly would,” he says, “I would say, ‘You're making a good choice with SyAM.’ I would tell them that working with the SyAM team gets things done and they will enjoy exemplary service. The SyAM people will help you out and walk you through the implementation of each piece.”

David concludes, “It has been a great experience working with SyAM. I've only dealt with Mike and Nick, but I know there's other people behind the scenes. Every time we've needed help, they have been there to help me with an issue or answer a question or point me in the right direction. So yes, it's been great. I wasn't expecting it to be as good as it is.”