


Challenge

Talked with regarding desirable technology in a high profile, multi-venue environment (large conference hall) environment. The colleges needed a cost-effective solution that would deliver a full range of features and maximum flexibility.



Solution

In-house set-up, configuration and deployment of 116 new switches across both colleges sites. The solution makes it easier for the colleges to manage and flex network configurations for changing audiences and to meet the presentation demands of corporate conference organisers.



Network

Flexible, centralised, future-ready configuration that can be controlled, monitored and adapted by everyone in the IT team with no extra training elements. In contrast to rival offerings sold around the university.



From academic institution to conference venue

IT Manager Dave Johnstone notes after their technology requirements, including internet and Wi-Fi connectivity. For two thirds of the year, the colleges are academic institutions where communities of up to 800 students, fellows and staff live, work and study. During university vacations, the colleges play host to conferences and events for commercial and public sector customers, including hundreds of visitors and delegates.

Replacing end of life hardware

Dave Johnstone explains: "We needed to replace our core networking hardware because it had reached the end of its life. There's a misconception that Cambridge colleges have a lot of money so operate a high budget and needed to get clear value from our investment." Dave explored the market and contacted suppliers, talking to peers at other Cambridge institutions to find out about their equipment and contracts.



"The feature set of the Omada by TP-Link products met our needs and offered us lots of interesting things. When we delved into it, it ticked all the boxes for features, pricing, licensing, hardware range for our environment, UK support, limited lifetime warranty, switch features... at a price we could afford."

Dave Johnstone,
IT Manager, Robinson and Selwyn Colleges



A rational decision based on value and capability

Dave approached TP-Link directly and worked with our account manager to specify and complete the sale, with no reseller involvement. "It was a easy decision in the end," he says. "To fulfil the requirements of our finance process, I obtained detailed quotes from three suppliers. TP-Link's quote stood out clearly. Most of the competitor products either lacked capability or were only available at a price point that was three, four, five or even six times as much!" Dave was impressed that the Omada by TP-Link switch range exceeded the capability of the obsolete equipment.

A straightforward and confident roll-out

Dave and his team carried out the replacement themselves. Across both colleges, they deployed 116 new Omada by TP-Link switches and two controllers. Dave says: "It took 30 minutes to set up the first controller and install it in our network rack. Within 15 minutes later, I had configured the first switch." Although Omada by TP-Link offers cloud-based solutions, Dave selected a subscription-free on-site controller. "We don't have any remote sites and all our equipment is physically connected within the two colleges, so there was no need. But it's good to know I could also control it via the cloud if I needed to."



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Power to every port and easy management

The new switches deliver better performance and higher Power over Ethernet (PoE) budgets than the legacy equipment, with the added advantage of easier management and configuration. Previously, switches had to be manually reconfigured to ensure power was provided in every location where conference organisers needed it. Dave explains: "Before, to save cost, we didn't have power to every port. With the Omada by TP-Link switches, power is included everywhere. This makes it far easier to maintain consistency in our set-up and standards."

Flexible, secure and centralised configuration

Because the colleges operate effectively when events are occurred by conferences and events, the way the network is used changes throughout the year. Sophisticated organisations bring their own technology specifications for presentations and demonstrations. Dave and his team need to provide the right connections. "We have to be quite dynamic to change the set-up at short notice," he says. "For example, to display a poster or create displays for a video feed. The Omada by TP-Link controllers centralise that for us. Any of my team members can change the set-up using the switch profiles. It's easy and doesn't require any special training. They choose the configuration, hit save, and it works."



A combination of excellent value and leading features

Other brands' network switches also offer centralised management, but as Dave observes, it usually comes at a much higher cost. "A lot of other vendors charge a large annual fee for a limited lifetime warranty which is included with Omada by TP-Link. Because we don't have a per-device annual subscription, I know exactly what the cost of ownership would be when I first chose the Omada switches. Some of the competitor switches I looked at had less power per switch, so I would have had to purchase more of them to achieve the outcome we wanted."

Futureproof for the foreseeable

Dave's quest for value and performance includes the longer-term outlook. "This is well-designed technology that will be suitable for our needs for at least the next four years, and gives us more options for the future," he confirms. He is also impressed with the reseller service, with a prompt replacement for one faulty switch. "We haven't yet needed to call on the helpline, but knowing that Omada by TP-Link provides access to in-house, UK-based support is reassuring. Non-UK and third-party support can in my experience be varied in quality. With Omada by TP-Link that's not an issue."



"Deploying over 100 switches was easy; it only took a few minutes to configure each one. I have never experienced such a frictionless deployment. The technology is well thought out and comes at an excellent price point."

Dave Johnstone,
IT Manager, Robinson and Selwyn Colleges



Technology that outperforms

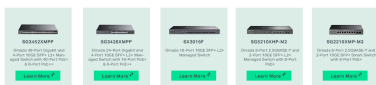
Dave Johnstone said: "I would absolutely recommend Omada by TP-Link's switches to anyone. It's a powerful and cost-effective solution. When my colleagues ask about the benefits of their solutions from high profile brands, I know that we have everything they do and more, without their annual costs and lifetime fees."

100% centralised cloud management of the whole network from different sites - all controlled from a single interface anywhere, anytime.

Cloud

Omada Products Installed

PoE Switch



Hardware Controller



Learn more about the Omada by TP-Link range

Visit robinson.cam.ac.uk/conferences and sel.cam.ac.uk/conferences to find out more about conference facilities at the two colleges.