



## Customer story

Solutions and services for ASPs

# Northharbour delivers a secure, reliable and high performance ASP service for schools and colleges



**There is a proven link between the use of IT and pupils' achievements.**

But all too frequently, schools and colleges struggle to maintain and update their IT infrastructure.

To address this problem, Northharbour decided to launch a new outsourced IT service that would reduce IT complexity for schools, while improving the reliability of their systems. It selected Ericom's PowerTerm® WebConnect RemoteView solution to provide the platform for its new LearningPoint service and took advantage of Ericom's "Software as a Subscription" (SaaS) license agreement to minimise up-front costs. As a result, the company now offers a secure, reliable and affordable IT service that helps schools extend the use of IT in the curriculum, in line with new targets from the Department of Education and Standards (DfES).

“ Ericom offers the perfect combination of a powerful product together with flexible pricing for ASPs. PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView has enabled us to deliver LearningPoint as a high performance, reliable service to our customers ”

Martin Clarke  
Managing Director, Northharbour



**INDUSTRY**  
Education

### CUSTOMER

Northharbour: Application Services Provider (ASP) delivering outsourced solutions to schools and colleges

### PRODUCT

PowerTerm® WebConnect RemoteView

### CHALLENGES

Provide a reliable and cost effective outsourced IT service for schools

Help schools use IT more extensively throughout the curriculum, in line with DfES directives

### SOLUTIONS

Deploy PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView to provide remote access to Windows® Terminal Server based applications and resources from any computer

Take advantage of Ericom's 'Software as a Subscription' pricing model to align expenses with actual and future revenues

### BENEFITS

- A powerful and reliable platform that can be scaled up to support many thousands of concurrent users
- An easy-to-use management console that can be used to ensure optimum performance for customers
- No large up-front software license costs, enabling Northharbour to invest instead in developing its service
- The ability to help schools make measurable improvements to the way they use IT

# “Ericom had a powerful solution - at the right price”

For many years, the government has been promoting the use of IT in schools, and there is strong evidence to suggest that computers can help improve student achievement. All schools now have at least some computers in classrooms, libraries or dedicated IT suites, but the Department for Education and Standards (DfES) is keen to move even further ahead. In its latest directive, it states that schools must embed IT into the entire curriculum and use computers to help deliver classes on everything from geography to textiles, for pupils aged five onwards.

## A BETTER WAY FORWARDS

Martin Clarke, Managing Director of Northarbour, is a strong advocate for greater use of IT in schools.

However, he quickly realised that many schools and colleges would struggle to respond to the DfES directive, because their IT systems were simply not reliable enough and they lacked the resources to manage them.

“Being a parent, it concerns me when my children come home and say that the computers at school are rubbish. They shouldn't be,” he says. “The government has invested huge amounts of money in computers, but schools often find it hard to maintain and manage IT, so performance deteriorates and PCs soon become out-of-date.”

“It is not uncommon for a teacher to find that five or six of the thirty PCs in an IT suite don't boot up or don't run correctly,” he explains. “The teacher then wastes time, reallocating students to other PCs and trying to fix the problems. Poor IT has a detrimental impact on learning.”

Northarbour had been supplying IT equipment to the education sector for over five years and felt that there must be an alternative way to help

schools and colleges make effective use of computers. “There just had to be a better way forwards,” says Clarke.

## AN OUTSOURCED IT SERVICE

Northarbour decided that the answer lay in providing an outsourced IT service for schools. To succeed as an Application Service Provider (ASP), however, the company realised that it would need to find a solution that was:

- Affordable
- Reliable
- Easy to manage and maintain

Northarbour conducted a very thorough review of the market before selecting Ericom and PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView. This solution provides users with secure, local and remote access to Windows Terminal Servers. It enables individuals to access precisely the applications they need, from any computer, in any location, 24 hours a day. In addition, PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView moves application management from the desktop to a central system, reducing technical complexity for users.

“When we appointed Ericom, we were confident that we had found the right partner to work with us on making LearningPoint a reality,” says Clarke. “Ericom had a powerful solution - at the right price - to enable us to deliver more reliable IT for schools.”

PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView can be easily customised and soon became the base for LearningPoint. Northarbour appointed a third party software development firm, Artifex Technology Consulting, to help it build a web-based front end for LearningPoint and then worked with a number of local schools to put the service to the test. The feedback was extremely positive. With almost universal enthusiasm, the schools started to request more applications and features, and Northarbour continues to enhance and develop LearningPoint to take this feedback into account.

## A POWERFUL ASP PLATFORM

PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView is a versatile and powerful solution with many features that make it ideal for ASPs. For example, the solution has a central console from which ASPs can monitor and administer all system usage. Northarbour can use this console to ensure optimum performance for its customers, all of the time. The company can also centrally manage license subscriptions and easily upgrade software, so that schools always have access to the latest versions of their favourite applications.

“PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView has enabled us to deliver a high performance, reliable service to our customers,” says Clarke.



Importantly, PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView enables Northharbour to provide schools with much greater network security. Pupils, students and teachers always log into the server, not into the network, so schools can remove the risk of children gaining unauthorised access to school records or the Internet. "The security advantages of PowerTerm WebConnect are excellent," says Clarke.

“ Through our use of Ericom technology, we can now deliver an entirely new service to schools and colleges to help them use IT more successfully to improve the quality of learning. ”

#### **A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR ASPs**

Northharbour chose to take advantage of Ericom's Software as a Subscription (SaaS) pricing model. Therefore, rather than pay an up-front license fee, Northharbour pays regular fees linked to its actual usage of the service.

"This is a huge benefit and competitive advantage for us," says Clarke. "It has enabled us to invest in developing our market offering and growing our customer base, without having to make a large investment in software up front. Ericom offers the perfect combination of a powerful product together with flexible pricing for ASPs."

Throughout the development of the LearningPoint service, Ericom worked closely with Northharbour. "If it wasn't for Ericom's support, we would never

have got this far, this quickly," says Clarke. "Ericom has helped us to get the performance that we need. It has provided valuable training and access to consultants whenever we need them."

He adds: "From the technical team to the senior management, we have received excellent support from Ericom. This has been a real advantage and has enabled us to achieve our goals."

#### **A WIN-WIN PROPOSITION FOR SCHOOLS**

Now fully developed and available in the UK, LearningPoint offers a host of advantages for schools and colleges.

Pupils, parents and teachers can use any Internet Browser solution to access the LearningPoint portal. Then, after entering the required log-in and password details, they can open a software application, find their work and access any shared resources needed. Pupils can start assignments at school and complete them later, without having to have the specific software application on their home PCs. Parents can check attendance reports and assignment marks, while teachers can receive, mark and set work, from any location.

Because all of the required educational applications are stored centrally and access is easy via a portal on PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView, school computers only need to have an Internet Browser and a web connection. This means that locally stored applications can be deleted, freeing up disk space and improving processing power. As a result, schools can extend the life of their older computers and get greater value from their existing investment in IT. They can also use less powerful, cheaper PCs or thin-

client terminals, which are less likely to be stolen or damaged.

"It's a win-win proposition for schools," says Clarke. "They outsource their IT headache to us, gain reliable, secure IT systems and derive longer term value from their existing computers."

#### **A POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR NORTHARBOUR**

Although a small company, Northharbour is making big waves in the education sector with its new offering. Schools as far away as South Africa have contacted the company, attracted to its 'different approach'. There are other companies that provide online access to shared educational resources, but Northharbour believes that it is unique in being the only company to offer schools and colleges access to their applications and resources anywhere, through a single sign-on portal.

Clarke is confident about the future. "The bottom line is that there is a proven link between IT usage and pupil attainment," he says. "Through our use of Ericom technology, we can now deliver an entirely new service to schools and colleges to help them use IT more successfully to improve the quality of learning."

The company has engineered its LearningPoint solution to support up to 20,000 users initially, but as its business grows, it can easily expand. "One of the unique points about the Ericom solution is that it has a really scalable architecture," says Clarke.

He concludes: "PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView enables us to minimise the cost and complexity of IT, while at the same time deliver high performance, reliability and improved security. And that's precisely what our customers need."

### **ERICOM – THE BEST IN THIS BUSINESS**

Ericom Software delivers enterprise applications to users. We provide corporate connectivity, e-business, wireless, XML, business-to-business, and enterprise application integration solutions. Our goal is to ensure that our customers achieve the maximum return from their enterprise applications and environment – legacy, current and future. We call this Enterprise Application Access.

Alongside the suite of access products, Ericom provides consultancy and services to web-enable and modernise existing applications for companies looking to advance their business operations without wholesale change of core systems.

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