



Software Defined AV Delivers Innovation and Better Business Decisions

Los Angeles Community College District

ENROLLMENT:

Approximately 250,000 students

LOCATION:

9 Colleges across 40 cities and 882 square miles in Los Angeles, CA

Challenges

- Its current AV technology was complex and frustrating to troubleshoot.
- Inflexible for faculty and staff
- The AV systems were creating business challenges

Key Results

- A massive reduction in complexity
- A flexible, more reliable and secure solution that could be self-maintained
- Innovation to improve student outcomes
- Data to enhance utilization of real estate and better business decisions

Background

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is the largest community college district in the United States and is one of the largest in the world with approximately 250,000 students. The LACCD was in the process of a very large construction program that involved an explosive increase of smart classrooms. The District faculty articulated that the classrooms that are technology-enabled with AV and internet connectivity to provide an integrated learning experience are delivering greater student success. The technology is succeeding in engaging the students which leads to positive outcomes and they want to continue that effort.

Problem

In the past, they put in AV systems installed by professionals. It was excellent execution and everything was done perfectly. Unfortunately, in an economic crisis, perfection would be de-prioritized. The flaws in that strategy were evident—it wasn't something they could self-manage.

"Fundamentally, it's a black box. You don't know how it really works. The code is all somewhere else. That bothers us because we're then at the mercy of someone else," Mata commented. "It's great technology, and maybe it's perfect for someone else. It's not a good fit for us," he added. With a large deployment looming, Mata and his team started testing new technology.

Solution

Mata had a chance to experience a demonstration of the Utelogy platform at a California Community College Chief Information Systems Officers' Association Conference (CISOA). He saw it as disruptive technology—something he thought would be useful for negotiating with legacy options, for planning the future, and for creating opportunities for innovation.

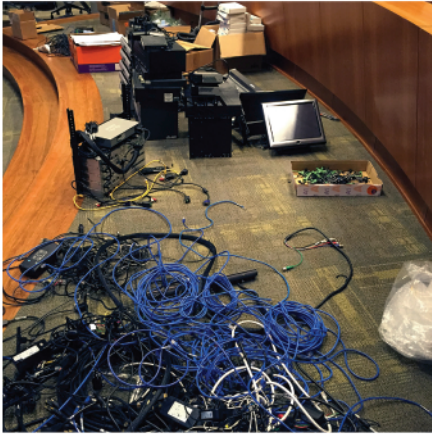
Despite this being something that would be very different for Mata's team, he wasn't concerned. "End users don't care about the underlying technology. They're more about the outcome," he explained.

Outcome

After testing Utelogy, the team made a decision to do a brain transplant of sorts and they removed the components that were causing them problems and replaced them with Utelogy.

"It's a massive reduction in the complexity of the system and it's much easier to troubleshoot and saves us money. Even though we had the most premier hardware, we were living with compromises."

Jorge Mata, CIO,
Los Angeles Community College District



"It allows us to deliver better utilization of classroom real estate and understand how many students were served by that technology."

Jorge Mata, CIO,
Los Angeles Community College District



The LACCD then decided to take one of its most mission critical rooms—the hearing room—and convert it to Utelogy. Following that, they deployed Utelogy in the board room and those problems went away too.

Over the years, the LACCD had AV professionals come in and provide excellent execution. But it was all done with hardware that was custom coded and the team didn't know how it really worked. Mata explained, "It's like we're at the mercy of someone else. While we may want to engage someone to help us on projects, it's very different from being forced to engage someone to help."

Flexibility, Reliability and Security

By merging their AV solution into the IP world or networked AV, they now get all the flexibility of those networks, the reliability, and the security practices that are already implemented in those networks while saving money. At LACCD, they view AV as just another type of data moving over the network. They already have protocols set to prioritize it, they know how to broadcast it, protect it, and multi-cast it.

"We have our Utelogy server right next to my payroll and ERP servers, so Utelogy gets the same level of security as the rest of our system", added Mata. "It's a massive reduction in the complexity of the system and it's much easier to troubleshoot and saves us money. Even though we had the most premier hardware, we were living with compromises."

More Innovation, Not Fewer People

The LACCD is growing and their need for technology is only increasing. While the Utelogy platform can assist in reducing the need for real-time technicians assigned to help desks and for physically troubleshooting AV systems, the reality is that higher education, corporations and other facilities will only have a greater need for technology in the future.

"This is not technology to reduce our need for people. It's really technology to address the increased dependency on technology and AV in all of our classrooms, and in all parts of our business and be able to manage that," Mata commented.

Assisting with Business Decisions

The Utelogy platform is capable of pulling global use data across classrooms and the equipment that's located in those classrooms. While it was not the reason Mata and his team selected Utelogy, knowing they have the capability his intent is to use that data to help in making decisions. Decisions in large deployments can be very expensive. One of the colleges in the district is activating almost 100 smart classrooms in one project. That kind of scale means decision-makers need data to back their decisions on what kind of equipment goes in each room.

With real data, higher education can understand which rooms and technology get requested more and what gets used, and for how long. "It allows us to deliver better utilization of classroom real estate and understand how many students were served by that technology," Mata explained. "We're ensuring that all future devices are IP networking equipped. It's not just for Utelogy to control them but it's for us to get metrics on them," added Mata.