



LAUTECH Lays Foundations for Exciting Educational Developments with Google



Lautech

Ladoke Akintola University of Technology is a technical university located in Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria. The university has 25,000 students and employs more than 3,000 staff, offering a creative, industrious approach to learning.

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Boost infrastructure capabilities
- Offer a reliable, secure, and cost-effective communication system
- Move to a paperless administration system

What they did

- Signed up for the EGD Programme to increase internet access
- Selected Google Apps for Education for collaboration features and administrative use

What they accomplished

- Thorough training for any students and staff on digital communications
- More efficient communication between students and staff
- A more collaborative, supportive learning environment for students

Challenge

LAUTECH's ambition is to use technology to help students progress with their education and excel in their future careers. It is also focused on streamlining administration to speed up communication between students and staff. Having access to the internet is seen as a key part of achieving both these goals. However, due to costs and resourcing, bandwidth on campus was restricted to 6Mb/s. As a result, communicating with students was mostly done through notice boards and there were no student email accounts.

While teachers had official email accounts, they were concerned by security risks as some students who needed the internet for work would resort to hacking the wifi and even hijacking staff accounts. Staff concerned about this issue found it hard to focus on their work, always waiting for the next hacking attack. For the IT team, battling with internal security breaches became a daily chore.

"We knew addressing the bandwidth issues would move us away from time-consuming paper-based administration and improve communication throughout the university. But simply scaling up our current network capacity would cost around \$437,500, which we might not be able to afford," explains Adebajo-Paul Adebawale, Network Administrator for LAUTECH

Solution

After hearing about LAUTECH's issues, Google invited the university to participate in a Google initiative that ensures Google Apps for Education, the free communication and collaboration suite hosted online by Google, is a success in an educational institution where the technical infrastructure is fragile. As part of this initiative, in countries where the cost of internet bandwidth is prohibitively high, Google offers access a fixed amount of internet bandwidth at no extra charge for up to three years.

Google collaborated with LAUTECH on getting 25Mb/s of broadband so the university could offer each student a monthly allowance of 250MB of data. LAUTECH sourced local grants to add a further 10Mb/s to the quota. Subsequently, LAUTECH has independently grown both throughput and student data allocation.

Securing the extra bandwidth meant that LAUTECH could put Google Apps at the heart of its plans for improving communication between staff and students. The service includes Gmail, Google Talk, Google Calendar and Google Docs and provides students with access to email from any internet connected device. The university now has 30,000 Google Apps accounts for students and staff.

Benefits

- Email for All Ends Security Threats
 - With a suitable technology infrastructure in place, LAUTECH was able to supply students with email addresses, eliminating the hacking attacks which prevented staff from using their email accounts, as well as saving the IT team's time in firefighting security issues.

- Support and Training Boosts Adoption
 - To encourage adoption, the Vice Chancellor issued a mandate for all offices to go paperless. Dr Omidiora, ICT Director, emphasises the importance of this high level support: “Our Vice Chancellor is a strong believer in the benefits of technology in education and has practically removed paper-based correspondence and administration from his personal in-tray. This sets a good example for the rest of the institution.”
 - However, there are some staff, both within academia and administration, who found the cultural adjustment of going digital challenging as they were completely unfamiliar with using technology and were more comfortable with the paper-based approach. To address this, LAUTECH began training students and staff on how to use Google Apps, starting with administrative staff. While not obligatory, the training has proved popular. As a result, the suite is starting to be used for administrative purposes, including managing the payroll in Google Docs, resolving student complaints over Gmail and arranging meetings through Google Calendar.
 - “Training of non-academic staff has been an essential part of embedding Google Apps into the smooth-running of the establishment,” explains Dr Omidiora. “While at first the team were reluctant to use the technology, they soon understood how simple it was. Consequently, the entire administrative operation is becoming more efficient. It’s great to see more staff members joining the training day by day.”
- Collaborative Culture Strengthens University Community
 - Engagement with Google Apps has also expanded organically amongst students with the help of two LAUTECH Google Student Ambassadors (GSAs), who were specially selected and trained by Google to help the university get the most from Google Apps. Now students use Google Groups, a simple way to run online group discussions, whereas in the past these discussions would perhaps not have taken place at all. They also hold Hangouts with some of their lecturers and contact the university staff via Gmail with any requests, as well as submitting assignments via Google Docs.
 - This renewed approach to communication is particularly important for the university’s culture, helping establish a more supportive, collaborative environment. For instance, Google+, Google’s social networking application, has been used to create a hub for information, including availability of course grades, news on sporting fixtures, examination times and video clips of students introducing themselves.
 - “Without the free bandwidth from Google we would not have been able to make the most out of Google’s fantastic suite of online tools. Through using Google Apps to enable quick responses to queries over Gmail and access to course information via Sites we’ve started to break down communication barriers between lecturers and students. Now we see more communication and collaboration of all kinds across the campus, which is having a positive impact on the culture and the smooth-running of the institution” explains Adebajo-Paul Adebawale.

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- An Iconic Example of the Benefits of ICT in Education
 - Bayodele Olotu, Program Manager, Google, concludes, "With a supportive ICT team and committed Vice Chancellor, LAUTECH has become an icon for the benefits of ICT in education for Nigeria. Not only have they seized the opportunity to make the most of the bandwidth and its possibilities, they've really taken ownership of Google Apps. We're looking forward to seeing what further transformations this leads to for the university."

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