

Andalusia deploys 220,000 Ubuntu desktops in schools throughout the region

Isotrol and Canonical's Premium Service Engineer (PSE) support service delivers an improved learning experience to 600,000 students in Andalusia.

Summary

The Andalusian Regional Government, Spain, wanted to improve access to IT in schools throughout the region. It asked IT services company Isotrol to implement an integrated technology infrastructure to connect 2,000 schools in Andalusia. Isotrol implemented 220,000 Ubuntu-based workstations in more than 2,000 schools throughout the region. Now, technology plays an integral role in delivering a more dynamic learning experience in schools across Andalusia. Teachers and students can share information quickly and easily, while each school receives dedicated support from a centralised support service.

Challenge

Government organisations face constant pressure to meet educational demands within tight budgets. They must ensure that schools offer students a high-quality learning experience. As technology continues to play a prominent role in the classroom, governments and schools are turning to free software to help deliver a cost-effective and dynamic learning environment.

Already committed to the adoption of open-source software, The Andalusian Regional Government launched a project to transform education in the region. The And@red project aimed to:

- Guarantee access to information and communication technologies (ICT) to all Andalusian citizens regardless of their place of residence or social status
- Provide access to information and services provided by the regional administration through the Internet
- Adapt basic public services, particularly in education and health, to the demands and potential of 'The Knowledge Society'

As part of this initiative, the government contracted Spanish IT services company Isotrol to implement a new technology infrastructure that connected 1,500 schools in the region. After winning a competitive tender, Isotrol was also invited to launch a new infrastructure management project to ensure that each school received technical support as and when it was needed.

Antonio José Sáenz Albanés, CTO, Isotrol, says, "Before the And@red project, the education centres in Andalusia were not interconnected. Some of them had Internet access and some of them had a couple of PCs with educational applications. But there was no standard educational model in place, and the teachers usually just used the PCs to teach computing."

The Ubuntu solution

Isotrol implemented a collaborative network of 220,000 Ubuntu-based workstations in more than 2,000 schools across Andalusia.

Used by 600,000 students and 75,000 teachers, the Ubuntu-based operating system, Guadalinex EDU, is now an accepted standard in schools throughout the region. By the end of the And@red

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project in 2012, 4,000 schools, around 1.5 million students and nearly 200,000 teachers will be using Guadalinex every day.

Rafael Garcia Rivas, Director of Advanced Management Centre, Junta de Andalucía says, “Teachers and students throughout Andalucía now have access to a stable and easy-to-use technology environment. They can find and share educational information more easily. And they can work on more innovative, interactive lessons with an improved IT infrastructure in place.”

Isotrol also introduced the Advanced Centre for ICT Schools Management, El Centro de Gestión Avanzado (CGA). The CGA offers a centralised support service to the Andalusian schools network and creates IT solutions that are tailored to meet the needs of Andalusian teachers and students.

With such a large-scale project to undertake, Isotrol decided to take advantage of Canonical’s support. Antonio José Sáenz Albanés says, “We worked very closely with Canonical. Their support has been invaluable in the development, deployment and support phases of the project.”

Results

Single point of contact delivers peace of mind

Isotrol’s strong partnership with Canonical has been key to the successful delivery of the And@red project. Antonio José Sáenz Albanés says, “Canonical provided us with a Premium Service Engineer (PSE) who acts as a trusted single point of contact for any issues we experience.

“We can directly escalate problems to our PSE who can help us resolve issues quickly and effectively, and gives us peace of mind that we can provide a responsive service to the Andalusian network of schools. Our PSE also helped us proactively manage our systems by optimising and automating systems deployment, which will save us a substantial amount of management and support costs. It’s useful having an expert on-hand to consult with and work in parallel to ensure that our solutions work seamlessly with each new Ubuntu release. We also use Launchpad for bug reporting and questions. It’s been really useful for helping us keep our support service on track.”

Training centres boost teacher confidence

Thanks to comprehensive training sessions run by the CGA operators, teachers and students can now take full advantage of their new, integrated IT infrastructure.

Antonio José Sáenz Albanés says, “The CGA operators were instructed to answer every question and query regardless of how long it took. This, along with carefully-planned training sessions, meant that teachers never felt that they were alone with the technology.”

Improved collaboration encourages creative teaching

One of the main goals of the And@red project was to ensure the seamless integration of technology into the classroom. The result of the project has seen much greater communication between teachers and students.

Antonio José Sáenz Albanés says, “With a collaboration platform in place, teachers can store and share their ideas in a central repository. They are less likely to be held back by a lack of creativity. They can work on producing more innovative and dynamic lessons that will really engage their students.”

Easy-to-use, stable infrastructure saves time

Isotrol has been particularly impressed by the stability of the new school IT environment. Antonio José Sáenz Albanés says, “The Ubuntu distribution is more reliable than the alternatives. It’s stable, easy-to-use and easy-to-manage. It’s also compatible with a range of hardware, so we haven’t experienced any integration issues. That’s been particularly important because teachers and students need to be able to work with Guadalinex whether they’re in school or at home.

“Basing our distribution on Ubuntu has also allowed the CGA to dedicate more resources to improving day-to-day tasks. And it means we can dedicate more time to providing hardware support and developing new technology solutions for the classrooms.”

