

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

TAKING IT SUPPORT FOR A VIBRANT UNIVERSITY TO A NEW LEVEL

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

"It became increasingly clear that we needed to do more to support our users and the variety of devices they were bringing to the university."

SARAH KENNEDY
IT SUPPORT OFFICE MANAGER

Founded on principles of excellence, equality and opportunity for all, the University of York opened in 1963 with just 230 students. In less than 50 years, York has become one of the UK's leading universities for teaching and research and is ranked among the top 100 universities in the world. York now has more than 30 academic departments and research centers and a student body that has expanded to more than 13,000. Times Higher Education named York its "University of the Year" in 2010.

York's campus is in Heslington on the southern end of the city. Heslington West is the University's original location while a £750 million campus expansion at Heslington East, which opened last year, has a range of academic buildings including two new departments that reflect the University's growth.

SEEKING A WAY TO SERVE END USERS' EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

Prior to implementing the Bomgar solution, York used Microsoft's Systems Management Server (SMS) to provide remote IT support for its managed PCs across campus. Microsoft's SMS is a Windows-based product designed to manage, support and maintain a distributed network of computer resources. However, this solution did not give York's IT department the ability to provide remote support for additional users, such as those with non-Windows devices, their own laptop on campus or a desktop at their dorm room or home.

In 2010, David Surtees, Assistant Director (Enterprise Systems), attended a multi-university conference that emphasized the obligation of IT organizations to respond to the needs of their university communities. Surtees recognized the importance of bringing that responsiveness to the support York was providing to its computer users. At the same time, York's IT department was initiating plans to implement Office 2007 on its managed PCs which did not support SMS. These two events were the catalyst for York's IT department to look for a better solution for remote assistance.

As part of their search, the IT team consulted email discussion forums sponsored by EDU CAUSE, a non-profit association dedicated to advancing higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology. "There were quite a few positive discussions about Bomgar's solution, so we decided to have a closer look," said Kennedy.

FINDING A ROBUST AND FLEXIBLE REMOTE SUPPORT SOLUTION

In addition to considering cost, the York IT department had two principal goals. They wanted a remote support solution that would work with multiple operating systems and the ability for the IT team to collaborate and easily resolve issues without requiring extensive end-user involvement.

"One thing that set Bomgar apart from another popular solution that the other company wanted to charge extra to support anything other than Mac and Windows. Bomgar's solution also includes Linux and mobile device support. We have several departments that use Linux technology, so having that capability was an important factor in our decision," said Kennedy.



Bomgar's feature-rich solution impressed York's six member first-line support team and 55 member second-line team when it came to collaboration and ease of use. "There are so many extras that we get with Bomgar, such as session logs and the ability to transfer files between support reps that you don't get with a basic screen sharing software like SMS." Bomgar's solution also allows York's support reps to run a Unix or DOS shell that the end user can't see, making it possible to type code and execute commands to diagnose issues without the end user getting confused during a session. "That is a very popular feature with our second-line support team. And it really speeds up issue resolution," said Kennedy.

In the end, after a head-to-head trial by the IT staff of Bomgar and another solution, Bomgar's hosted solution was the clear winner due to the added features and useful functionality it provided. "Bomgar has enabled a massive shift in our approach to IT support. Before, if someone asked for support on their personal machine, we could only say 'no.' Now, if they ask us to do something like help them connect to the VPN from their home, we can say 'No problem. I'll connect you.' Gone are the days when we just had to say no."

EXTENDING THE REACH OF IT SUPPORT

York's IT support has now expanded well beyond its managed PCs because of Bomgar. For example, the Vice-Chancellor of the University travels with a delegation to China every year to hold a graduation ceremony for many of York's overseas students. This past year, a member of that party was having trouble connecting to Outlook to get her email while in China. She was amazed that York's IT department was able to easily connect to her computer and solve the problem. "That gave us a great feeling," said Kennedy. "And when we had a large snowstorm this past winter, we were able to support quite a number of people who were stranded at home, so they didn't have a day wasted just because they couldn't get to campus."

York's IT department has seen a notable decrease in escalation to second-tier support now that the Bomgar solution is in place. Best of all, they have received numerous emails and comments from end users who are pleased with the highly responsive and effective IT support they are now experiencing.

York's IT department is so happy with Bomgar that they plan to promote their services to the University by using the orange Bomgar Button icon that allows the user to initiate a support session from a device with a single click. "The Bomgar B icon really symbolizes the new level of support we are able to provide to the whole University community, so we plan to use this icon to push the fact that we can now do all these things. We want staff and students to know if they have a problem all they have to do is press the big B," Kennedy explained.

Bomgar is also playing a central role as the IT department rolls out new technologies. Currently, the IT team is heavily involved in implementing virtualization solutions, streaming applications, and virtualized desktops. Most of the products being used to deliver these advanced technology solutions come with their own built-in support tools. "But we have decided not to use them. We're much more comfortable using Bomgar as our solution for supporting the new and up-and-coming technologies we're investing in," said Pritpal Rehal, Senior Digital Workspace System Administrator.

The York IT department sees Bomgar as an integral part of its mission to offer the highest quality educational experience to its existing and prospective students. According to Kennedy, "Student fees continue to rise throughout the education sector. We have to distinguish ourselves from other universities in the U.K. by providing the extra value that entices students. So we want them to know that when they come here, we're going to support them no matter how they like to use technology in their work and studies. Bomgar is making that commitment possible."

ABOUT BOMGAR

Bomgar provides remote support solutions for easily and securely supporting computing systems and mobile devices. The company's appliance-based products help organizations improve tech support efficiency and performance by enabling them to securely support nearly any device or system, anywhere in the world — including Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS, Android, BlackBerry and more. More than 6,500 organizations across 65 countries have deployed Bomgar to rapidly improve customer satisfaction while dramatically reducing costs. Bomgar is privately held with offices in Jackson, Atlanta, Washington D.C., Paris and London, and on the web at www.bomgar.com.

