



Microsoft Partner Program Partner Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: Brazil
Industry: Software

Partner Profile

Based in São Paulo, Brazil, Techne provides powerful, innovative, and award-winning products to educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and governmental agencies.

Business Situation

Techne customer University of Sorocaba (UNISO) faced functional and cost inefficiencies with its internally developed education-management solution based on a UNIX and Oracle platform.

Solution

Techne replaced the university's UNIX-based IT infrastructure with one based on the Microsoft® server product portfolio and deployed its Lyceum education-management solution.

Benefits

- Unprecedented information-access capabilities
- Enrollment up 32 percent
- Administrative costs down 25 percent
- IT total cost of ownership down 60 percent

Education-Software Leader Delivers Results for Prestigious Brazilian University

“This solution has proven to be the decisive factor in the dramatic, and favorable, turnaround in enrollments at UNISO.”

Maurício Gomes, Chief Information Officer, UNISO

Techne, a major provider of education-management software to institutions throughout Brazil, was engaged by the University of Sorocaba (UNISO) to help address its IT problems. An internally developed solution, and its UNIX-based infrastructure, was costly to enhance and maintain. As a result, administrative costs and student fees remained high, hindering the university's ability to allocate resources to attract new students. With help from the Microsoft® Partner Program, Techne deployed a solution based on its Lyceum product, running on an entirely new IT infrastructure based on the Microsoft server product portfolio. Consequently, the university's IT costs are down by 60 percent, student fees are down by 25 percent, and student enrollment is up by 32 percent. Moreover, Techne has reinforced its reputation as a provider of innovative and cost-effective solutions.



“We needed a solution that was tested and true, that was from an industry leader, and that would fit the way we do business. Lyceum running in a Microsoft environment was the clear winner.”

Nilson Leis, Vice-Rector for University Management, UNISO

Situation

Founded in 1990 by a former vice dean of the University of São Paulo (Brazil), Techne is a leader in providing administrative and management software for educational institutions. Since 1999, the company’s flagship product, Lyceum, has helped schools, colleges, and universities to operate more efficiently and provide better services to students, teachers, parents, and alumni. In addition to Lyceum, Techne offers solutions for health management and governmental applications, and provides consulting, implementation, training, and support.

The leaders of Techne attribute their company’s success to two primary factors: a passionate commitment to improving higher education in Brazil and participation since 2003 in the Microsoft® Partner Program. According to Elisa Wolyneec, Director of Marketing, that partnership gives Techne easy access to the technologies and services it needs to address complex customer needs on a single platform.

“Our Microsoft partnership is instrumental in helping us maintain a near-perfect record of on-time, on-budget delivery and in helping us keep our products on the leading edge,” Wolyneec says. “In addition, the Microsoft licensing policy for education helps make our solution very price-competitive for our customers.”

One such customer is the University of Sorocaba (UNISO), a prestigious private institution with some 12,000 undergraduate and 1,500 graduate students.

At the time of Techne’s first engagement with UNISO in 2003, the university was using a UNIX-based education-management solution that had been developed internally and was updated on an as-needed basis. As Maurício Gomes, CIO at UNISO, explains, this approach was anything but smooth. “We often had to

enlist the services of highly specialized technicians with costly maintenance contracts,” Gomes says. “Further, our internal support specialists were relying on UNIX- and Linux-based tools that were not necessarily easy to use.”

Gomes is seconded by Vice-Rector for University Management Prof. Nilson Leis, who was hired by UNISO to help address the problem. “When I first encountered the solution, I finally understood the meaning of *colcha de retalhos* [patchwork software],” Leis says.

Not surprisingly, the Unix infrastructure could not keep up with the institution’s need to contain costs and expand services in a competitive educational environment—and UNISO found its enrollments decreasing.

In response, Gomes, Leis, and their colleagues sought a more cost-efficient and powerful campus-management system and IT infrastructure. Their goals were twofold. “We wanted to reduce administrative costs sufficiently to warrant a reduction in student fees by at least 15 percent by 2005,” Leis says. “We also wanted to provide better services, including ‘anytime, anywhere’ delivery of academic and administrative information.”

Solution

In a selection process that was intensely competitive, Techne presented the selection committee its Lyceum solution running on an infrastructure based on the Microsoft server product portfolio including Microsoft SQL Server™.

“What made the process so competitive was that other solutions under consideration ran on an infrastructure based on UNIX and Oracle—both of which were widely installed throughout UNISO at the time,” Wolyneec explains. “With those solutions, UNISO could

“Microsoft has given us the strategic resources we need to grow our business and help our customers—one of most important segments of society—to grow theirs as well.”

Elisa Wolyneec, Director of Marketing, Techne Engenharia e Sistemas

keep the same platform technology and organizational culture, Techne had some extra convincing to do.”

With the help of consultants from the Microsoft Partner Program, Techne did convince UNISO IT executives to adopt both Lyceum and an entirely new IT infrastructure based on the Microsoft server product portfolio, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange Server, the Microsoft .NET Framework, and Microsoft Dynamics™ CRM. Wolyneec reports that this was partly because Lyceum is so widely respected in the education market and partly because of the solid advantages available through the Microsoft environment.

“We showed that the combination of Lyceum and Microsoft CRM could provide specific capabilities for recruiting new students and supporting relationships with students and alumni, capabilities unavailable in the competitive products,” Wolyneec says. “We showed also that SQL Server could provide a complete data-management solution with performance, ease of use, and total acquisition cost equal to or better than that of Oracle. And we showed the advantages of obtaining all the software technology that UNISO would need through a single vendor—Microsoft—and of accessing support services through a choice of local and regional Microsoft experts.”

For Leis, those advantages fit perfectly into his long-term view of what the solution should be. “We needed a solution that was tested and true, that was from an industry leader, and that would fit the way we do business,” Leis says. “As it turned out, Lyceum running in the Microsoft environment was the clear winner.”

Working with consultants from the Microsoft Partner Program, Techne and IT specialists at UNISO deployed the Lyceum solution and an

entirely new IT infrastructure. This included migrations from UNIX to the Microsoft server product portfolio, from Oracle to Microsoft SQL Server, from Critical Path to Microsoft Exchange Server, from Checkpoint to Microsoft Internet and Acceleration (ISA) Server, and from the Silverstream-Java application platform to the Microsoft .NET Framework. UNISO also replaced its Sun Enterprise E250 servers with new servers based on the Intel Xeon architecture. The deployment—which met all scheduling milestones and came in five percent under budget—was completed in late 2005.

Benefits

Through the extensive functionality of the Lyceum solution, the cost-effective Microsoft-based infrastructure that supports it, and an active working partnership with Microsoft, Techne has delivered an array of substantial benefits to UNISO. As a result, Techne has reinforced its own leadership role in the education-management market, strongly positioned itself for long-term profitability, and enhanced its reputation as a source of innovative and economical solutions for educational institutions.

Unprecedented Information-Access Capabilities

“We now have a fully integrated system that enables us to work efficiently without taking resources away from academics,” Gomes says. “Central to this system is a compelling set of single-logon self-service capabilities for UNISO students, faculty, and staff. These capabilities go far beyond what was available in the university’s prior solution. They also go beyond what is available in competitive education-management solutions.”

For example, the solution helps students to:

- Access a complete view of their relationship with the institution on a single Web page.

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Elisa Wolyneec, Director of Marketing, Techne

- Apply for admission and view class and exam schedules.
- Check enrollment appointments, enroll, or change enrollment in classes.
- Request transcripts, view course and grade history, and evaluate transfer credits.
- Manage accounts for charges, payments, financial aid, and admission deposit activity.

The solution also helps faculty to:

- View a complete calendar of classes and names of students enrolled in a given class.
- Send e-mail to one student, a group of students, or all students in a class with a single mouse click.
- Access class information, such as start and end dates, days and times, and location.
- Enter grades and write notes to be displayed on a student's transcript.

As Gomes notes, “These capabilities are due not only to the comprehensive integration of Lyceum and Microsoft CRM, but also to the general reliability, transparency, and real-time access to strategic academic and financial information made possible through the replacement of a UNIX-based IT infrastructure with one based on the Microsoft server product portfolio and other Microsoft technologies.”

Enrollment Up, Costs Down

Leis explains that such capabilities also are especially handy with the robust growth in enrollment that UNISO witnessed in recent years. “From academic years 2004 to 2005, the university enrolled 8 percent more students and from 2005 to 2006, another 22 percent,” Leis reports.

Leis credits such growth to a 25 percent reduction in student fees that has proved to be, as expected, very popular—and that was made possible by the cost savings enabled by the new solution and infrastructure.

“Remember, we were targeting only a 15 percent reduction when we initially proposed replacing the university's prior, UNIX-based solution and infrastructure,” Leis says. “By nearly doubling our target objective, we have proven the remarkable cost-effectiveness of running Lyceum on a Microsoft-based infrastructure.”

For example, UNISO is reporting savings of up to 60 percent in the total cost of ownership of the new solution and infrastructure. “This encompasses savings in software licensing, through a Microsoft Campus Agreement, and software and hardware support, help desk, and administration, through a completely integrated Active Directory® service infrastructure,” Gomez says. “For system maintenance in particular, the university is able to get by with a team of just three people—freeing up two from its prior team for more lucrative work, such as supporting solution enhancements.”

In sum, Gomes puts it this way: “This solution and infrastructure have proven to be the decisive factor in the dramatic, and favorable, turnaround in enrollments at UNISO.”

Powerful Long-Term Partnership

For Techne, Wolyneec points out, completing such a successful project for UNISO helps to build on an already-strong reputation as a provider of innovative and money-saving solutions to educational institutions of all kinds. Moreover, as a Microsoft Partner, Techne also can make its success more visible to such institutions—expanding its market reach and helping other schools and universities to realize the kind of benefits that UNISO is enjoying.

“Microsoft has demonstrated a strong commitment to education by providing us with outstanding technology, an impressive return on investment for customers, and expansive marketing and technical

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For more information about Techne products and services, visit the Web site at:

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For more information about UNISO, visit the Web site at:

www.uniso.br

assistance,” Wolyneć says. “Through seminars, joint sales calls, and highly responsive technical expertise, Microsoft has given us the strategic resources we need to grow our business and help our customers—one of most important segments of society—to grow theirs as well.”

Microsoft Partner Program

The Microsoft Partner Program is all about your success. The program is committed to helping you better connect with your customers through use of innovative tools, information, and services. Every day partners around the world are moving their businesses forward, increasing their market reach, improving their customers’ satisfaction, and reducing their cost of doing business. You create the path to your business growth through achievements like gaining a new skill, hosting your first product training event, landing an elusive client, or building a long-needed business collaboration. This is how your business moves, every day, in the direction that you desire.

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