Network Tester Finds a Home in the Student Resident Halls

AT A GLANCE

CUSTOMER: Valparaiso University

- 5,000 users at any one time
- 10,000+ network drops
- 44 buildings

CHALLENGE

- Current process for the port testing project was time consuming and inefficient.

MOST VALUABLE FEATURE

- Switch advertisement information via LLDP/CDP/EDP – knowing the switch name, port number, and VLAN information.

BIGGEST DIFFERENCE

- Cut project timeline from one month to one week

LINKSPRINTER ACES EVERY TEST AT VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

"Our process for testing our Ethernet drops was a giant pain. It took way too long and was hard for our student IT testers to complete, especially because they had to lug around a heavy laptop. But we just love this little LinkSprinter; it makes it so much easier." - Jason Kellerman, Director of Infrastructure, Valparaiso University

Every summer (in a "normal" non-COVID year) when Valparaiso University students have wrapped up their course work and vacated the residence halls, Jason Kellerman sends out his student 'IT Pros in training' to test each individual port throughout the six dorms across campus. The university has a "one port per pillow" policy, which ensures each student in the dorms will have access to at least one working Ethernet jack (in addition to Wi-Fi access).

This is incredibly important to Jason and the university, so he spends part of his summer on network validation every year, saying, *"we don't want to get caught off guard, and we want to make sure every student has a good service experience."*

While IT staff will complete the dorm testing this year (2021), the team is looking forward to welcoming back their student testers to complete the job again in 2022.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE OLD TESTING PROCESS

The previous process for this overwhelming project was cumbersome – for the student testers as well as Jason, who checked their work and fixed any faulty ports. The students lugged around a bulky laptop to every single port, plugged into the drop, ran the various tests, and annotated the results either in a spreadsheet or by hand on a form. The laptops were not ideal for this type of work, due to their size, weight, cost, and potential for damage. Even worse, each laptop's battery lasted only a few hours, and needed re-charging at least once a day.

The testing process itself was time-consuming, taking anywhere from 1-3 minutes per port. *"It was so frustrating, I knew I had to find a better way,"* said Jason. Using a quick online search, he found the LinkSprinter Pocket Network Tester, and hasn't looked back.

WHY HE CHOSE THE LINKSPRINTER?

The LinkSprinter was a better tester for Valparaiso University, because of its smaller size, faster testing, and reliable results. *"The students or our IT staff can take the LinkSprinter anywhere – lunch, even. It fits right in their pocket, and they don't need to worry about locking it up,"* said Jason.

Student testers now complete a full test in just 10 seconds, an improvement that allowed Jason's team to cut the project timeline down from the usual month-long process to just one week. LinkSprinter is also easier to use for non-network-savvy students. *"It's so simple that students don't have to worry about running tests incorrectly, and I know that I'm getting accurate information,"* says Jason. It provides consistent network information for each test that he can count on when he needs to fix faulty ports.

In addition to the student users, Valparaiso has equipped their first-line computer techs with LinkSprinter. Jason adds, *"This helps them triage reported issues to see if the problem is in the computer or the network. If it's in the network, I have all the test information I need and can handle the issue right away."*

WHAT IF AN ISSUE EMERGES DURING TESTING?

Using the old process of testing with a laptop and annotating a spreadsheet, students often didn't have the technical knowledge to troubleshoot after identifying a faulty port. This forced Jason to spend extra time going back to each faulty port and running further tests before he could fix it. Saving time is where he sees great value in the LinkSprinter, because the Link-Live Cloud service automatically stores all test details, enabling him to filter the results and quickly see where in the network the problems occurred (PoE, link to the switch, DHCP, gateway, Internet). With that information, he can quickly decide the next steps to ensure every student coming back in the fall has a functioning port.

LOOKING FORWARD

Having shaved three weeks from the time it takes to complete the port testing project every year, Jason and his team can better utilize that time and put the students on different projects. As we all can imagine, he says, *"there's always plenty to do!"*

For more information on the NetAlly LinkSprinter® Pocket Network Tester visit:

www.netally.com/products/linksprinter/

netAlly

simplicity • visibility • collaboration