

Enhancing Mae Fah Luang University's IT Center with the Intel vPro® Platform

Managing a vast IT system or a large computer center involves complex tasks like monitoring and maintaining an extensive fleet of devices to ensure round-the-clock availability, security, and performance. Not only does the IT department have to be in step with new technologies and innovations and manage immediate demands promptly, but it must also facilitate effective collaboration. These are challenges that IT staff must face on a daily basis.

Intel and Mae Fah Luang University (MFU) collaborated in testing the Intel vPro® platform at the Center for Information Technology Services (CITS), which handles more than 2,000 computers across the University. This project resulted in significant enhancement of CITS services such that, with only 10 IT personnel, the Center is well equipped to manage, secure, and maintain all computers under their care more quickly and conveniently.



The Challenges of the University in Digital Era

One of the MFU's goals is to be the number one leading digital university in the north of Thailand by transforming courses and curriculums to support blended learning. Therefore, it is vital for computer systems, labs, and devices to be ready and prepared for class use at all times. This is considered as an important mission for all 10 CITS personnel who have an extensive PC fleet to manage.

"We should be able to access and manage all computers in a classroom or any classroom groups, i.e. system updates and software installation," said Mr. Phinyo Kongmeelab, Head of Secretarial and Admin, CITS. "In the past, our IT people had to walk into each lab to turn on devices, monitor, and diagnose all issues. This was really time consuming. If we happened to do handwork at various offices in the University, we would face the issues of the working hours or the unavailability of the assigned employees, like gone for classes or for errands. With all these issues, our IT personnel wouldn't be able to do the work. They had to wait until the device's owner come back to the desk, then we could start working."



Evidently, the challenges on account of limited IT staff and the large numbers of devices to diagnose and troubleshoot, are compounded by the long distances to be covered to access the devices physically, and the consequent impacts of downtime to university officers and students. These factors put great pressure upon the IT personnel, ultimately impacting the CITS' performance.

The Intel vPro® Platform is the Answer

It is widely known that out-of-the-box remote desktop software offers a long-term solution to some of the above-mentioned issues, making it possible for IT personnel to access, diagnose and troubleshoot devices remotely. However, CITS has found that remote desktop solutions on the market are fraught with certain limitations that negate their usefulness. For instance, if the computer is turned off, remote desktop access is disabled as well. There is no way to remotely command a computer turn on or off or to access BIOS.

The Intel vPro® platform solution, on the other hand, is designed specifically for enterprise deployment, offering features that enhance performance, fleet stability and hardware-enhanced security. More importantly, through Intel® Active Management Technology (Intel® AMT) "out of band" remote manageability is possible, regardless of the power state of the device or whether the OS is operable. Coupled with Intel® Endpoint Management Assistant (Intel® EMA), which is free to use, IT system administrators can access and troubleshoot any endpoint devices within the network remotely from anywhere, thus eliminating the need for desk-side visits.

Hence, in the first phase of this project, the MFU's CITS has procured approximately 700 PCs equipped with the Intel vPro® platform, featuring Intel® Core™ vPro® and Intel® Iris® Xe.

"1 IT Staff Member to 700 Computers"

After testing the functions of the Intel vPro® platform, it became evident that this solution was ideal for the needs of the CITS, especially with the Intel® AMT technology coupled with Intel® EMA. The results showed that IT personnel can now work more effectively, dramatically reducing time spent in desk-side visits, and reducing the average time required to troubleshoot problems. Additionally, PC users also suffered less downtime.



From left to right: Mr. Noppakarn Pinit, Technician, Dr. Vittayasak Rujivorakul, Director of Center for Information Technology Services, Mae Fah Luang University and Mr. Phinyo Kongmeelab, Head of Secretarial and Admin, CITS



Low Cost with High Performance

The deployment of Intel vPro® platform inside the Center helped create many new use cases that enhanced the capabilities of the CITS' IT personnel. For instance, when a professor faces an issue with one computer in his lab, the IT team can promptly remote-diagnose and troubleshoot the issue, thus limiting any disruption to the class. For a routine task like turning on all computers in the Center every morning, just one IT person can remotely command a power on from the backend system, no longer requiring the staff member to personally go around the campus turning on every computer one by one as before. If there is a computer with issues relating to the BIOS, IT can now remotely enter the BIOS and troubleshoot.

It is clear that the deployment of Intel vPro® platform is helping rapidly solve problems of working time and resource shortage by utilizing its capabilities without any add-on cost. Plus, there is Intel® Stable IT Platform Program (Intel® SIPP) as part of the Intel vPro® platform, which helps support new technologies from Intel for at least 15 months. This makes the investment worthwhile for the University's service center. Following complete testing, the Center is highly satisfied with the performance delivered by the Intel vPro® platform and now plans on purchasing more vPro® systems in the future to ensure efficient management and maintenance of all computers within the University.

Summary

The success in enhancing efficiency at Mae Fah Luang University's CITS clearly demonstrates that maintaining an organization in a competitive market needs quick transformation, including new productivities within IT teams.

For more information on the Intel vPro® platform, please visit www.intel.com/vpro or contact natrapa.khunnathamdee@intel.com of Intel Microelectronics (Thailand) Co., Ltd.