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Case Study 2022

Curtin University

Our decision to wait for the functionality we needed from the new devices put us up against nail biting availability and an absolute deployment deadline. Trusting Compnow's advice has worked for us over three years. And they came through for us this time too.

Jared Gleim
Manager of IT Asset Management, Digital & Technology Solutions Organisation,
Curtin University

1300 COMPNOW
sales@compnow.com.au

Procurement

Expert delivery underpins top 1% position at Curtin University

The latest procurement exercise at Curtin University exemplifies the gains accruing from the strong alliance between its Digital & Technology Solutions team and Compnow. This Lab fitout project, with newly released M1 Apple iMacs, also typifies Compnow's ability to overcome the inevitable idiosyncrasies, constraints and challenges arising in ICT deployments.

Perth's Curtin University is ranked in the top one per cent of global universities on the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU 2021). It is known for its high-impact research, strong industry partnerships and commitment to preparing students for the jobs of the future.

The Challenge

Curtin University offers practical, internationally recognised courses that are designed with direct input from industry. The Labs across its campuses are critical areas as students prepare to graduate with the skills and knowledge they will need in the ever-changing global marketplace.

Jared Gleim, Manager of IT Asset Management at Curtin University's Digital & Technology Solutions, says: "Every device and all technology we purchase has to underpin our student offerings".

One of the University's Labs – usedby Screen Arts students for media presentations and video editing – was due for a planned three year lease cycle refresh. While nominally a simple exercise, there were both functionality specs to be met by the new Apple devices and physical space constraints to overcome. Crucially, it had to be completed in a timeframe that didn't incur a costly leasing extension.

Replacing like for like of the existing 21" Macs was not an option as "Apple was changing its product line up and running down components and this would have limited our ability to keep the fleet operational. Also, a 256 SSD wasn't enough, we needed at least 512. We were offered a 1TB fusion

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drive mixed with a traditional data drive to give us the speed and stability but I wasn't willing to take on the risk of so many potential failure points," Jared says.

Another issue complicating equipment choices for the Lab was the size of each desk. The next step up 27" device would have provided the functional capacity but was too large for the desks.

At this critical decision making time, Apple announced the new M1 processors and Curtin decided to wait for the release of a 512SSD iMac.

The problems of device availability and the inevitability of OS and software compatibility issues were further complicated by pressure for the Lab deployment to be undertaken in the specific timing of the July mid-year semester break. The leases expired at end July with the next break in late November.

"We were up against having no control over the release of the new OS. Without delivery we would have had to pay for lease extensions or reduce seats – and we must avoid any negative impact on the uni's reputation. We were also facing Covid lockdowns. It was a nail biting time," Jared says.

The Solution

Curtin University was one of Compnow's first customers when it opened its full service operation in Perth in 2019.

In 2021, with its deep Apple credentials, Compnow secured early access to a 24" M1 iMac test device and associated USB-C connectivity mouse and keyboard. This, plus their technical and JAMF-specific knowledge sharing, proved critical to the project. The Curtin Digital & Technology Solutions team was able to explore the iMac's different processes and to finalise the JAMF imaging management. Compnow meanwhile delivered the remaining 25 units for a problem free, on-time deployment.

Prior to having Compnow as part of the University's procurement lifecycle, the new iMacs would have been delivered direct from Apple. With Compnow as an expert intermediary, the equipment is deployed to the relevant campus with asset tags, MAC addresses and delivery reports. Compnow also undertakes the onsite installations.

"We had to find keyboard and mouse for the new iMacs. There aren't a lot of USB-C options out there. Compnow found some really good looking accessories and did the installation. I didn't even have to go to the Lab," Jared says.

Lincoln Phillips, Systems Engineer at Curtin's Digital & Technology Solutions and the project's inhouse JAMF expert says: "Compnow and we are on the same page with JAMF. We've been on the journey to thin imaging, moving away from hard drive imaging.

"Having the development machine meant we'd resolved 90% of the problems before the devices arrived. The M1 architecture is complex and layered. Having the test iMac meant we could use JAMF to get to each of the new OS layers, to look at the different workflows, and run our active directory.

"It wasn't a matter of click, click and everything works. I've got five pages of my own script customised for our environment. We use every part of JAMF because we're very heavy on configuration, on profiles and policies."

He says JAMF supports concise decision making: "Because of our policy driven imaging process, I have the confidence to throw away things that aren't really right, to go forward. I couldn't manage our machines without JAMF – it runs everything and is super efficient. I don't have to touch JAMF now – it just recognises: if this an M1, do this."

At a Glance

Compnow's timely sourcing of the brand new Apple M1 iMacs was critical to a Lab refresh project at Curtin University.

The Challenge

The successful go live was to deliver fit for purpose, JAMF managed devices prior to the looming deadline of the existing devices' end of lease.

The Solution

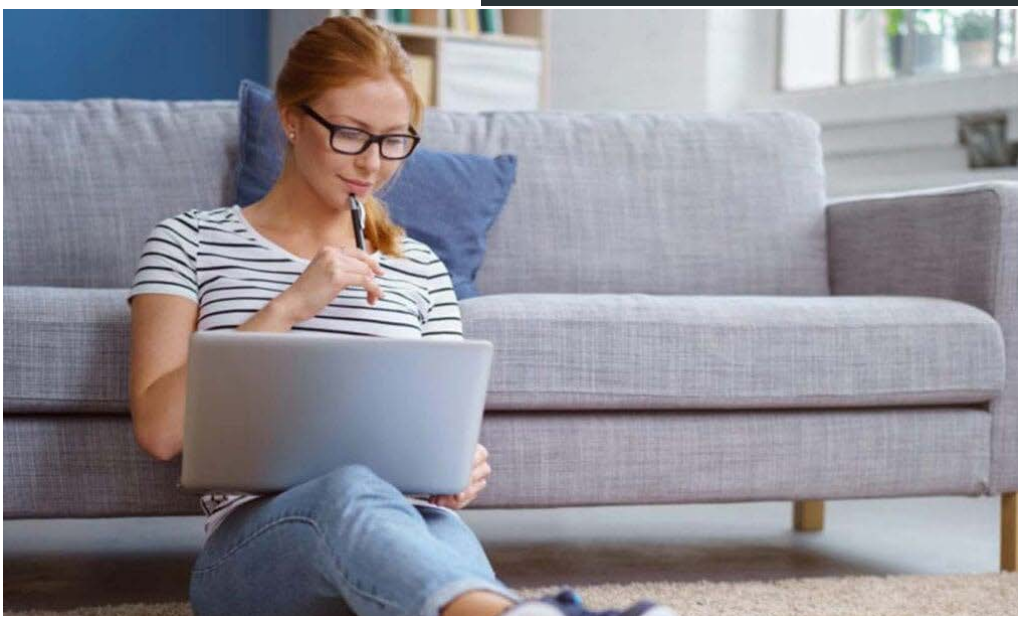
Fleet of newly released 21" iMacs, with specifically sourced keyboards and mouse. Curtin University and Compnow collaborated on the JAMF policy driven imaging process.

The Benefits

- Access to Compnow's national procurement and technical expertise
- Peace of mind with outsourced deployment
- Compnow's ability to identify potential issues and expertly rectify
- Move to efficiency of JAMF
- Compnow's direct presence in WA

The Service

- Procurement of Apple M1 iMacs
- Deployment services



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The Benefits

Compnow is an accredited supplier to Curtin University via its Procurement Hub. Proving the success of that position, the University recently renewed Compnow's contract for a further 12 months. The ongoing partnership sees Curtin University draw on the spectrum of Compnow's procurement services from needs analyses through to on time, cost effective delivery.

"Compnow has been fantastic since Day 1. They're always looking at ways to be a valuable extension of our team. They behave as a stakeholder, not just a vendor. And with the local warehousing, they can deploy within two days to any of our campuses," Jared says.

"Having access to all Compnow's people, on the ground in WA - their expertise and their understanding of universities - gives us confidence to go ahead with the best options for our students and staff," Jared says.

And Lincoln says he continues to gain value from Compnow. "What's really useful for us is they get the techs from other WA unis together so we can compare notes and build skillsets relevant to our businesses. And we have their people as a sounding board. We can reach out anytime and get the information we need so we can move on quickly. I get calls if they think I'd like to try a new approach and so I'm learning all the time."

"The new iMacs with their completely new architecture would have been a challenge without Compnow but we were able to go full steam ahead and get them into our Lab with no issues."

"Compnow are great with details. They scope the site, they check things like how to get equipment to a second floor without alift, and what security their people need to work on campus. They get the job done so I can focus on other things. There's so much peace of mind I'm getting from this relationship," Jared says.

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