



## The Customer

Methodist Ladies' College, Kew, is one of Australia's most successful and innovative independent schools for girls. With over 2,000 students and 200 teaching staff, MLC has a strong reputation for choice, academic excellence and innovative use of technology in education.

## The Environment

In 1990, MLC became the first school in the world to introduce personal notebook computers for all staff and students in Year 5 to 12. The College has an extensive cabled and wireless network infrastructure that supports the fleet of over 2,200 notebook PCs.

## The Challenge

To meet the College's technical specifications for a robust notebook PC incorporating a defined set of physical characteristics and demanding technology requirements including access to wireless networking and IEEE 1394 (FireWire) capability.

## The Solution

With partner Fed IT, Fujitsu PC supplied 800 LifeBook notebook PCs for use throughout the school. The LifeBook S6110 notebooks were configured each with a 40GB hard disk, internal CD ROM drive, built-in wireless cards and necessary operating software. The contract, managed by Fed IT includes a full time support technician onsite at MLC, as well as a large inventory of spare parts to provide 24 hour turnaround on all repairs. In instances where repair will take longer than 24 hours, a notebook will be loaned to student or staff.

## The Business Benefits

The Fujitsu PC LifeBook was chosen by MLC for its lightweight integrated architecture, advanced technology and competitive pricing. The integrated design reduces the amount of hardware that students have to carry while the inclusion of wireless networking supports the College's wireless direction.

# CASE STUDY Methodist Ladies' College

*"At MLC, we believe that the flexibility of notebook computers offers strong benefits for our students. Fujitsu PC offered us a product that met all of our unique requirements as well as the high level of service and support that we needed.*

*Technology enhances learning but only if it's technology that actually works."*

**Leon Guss,**  
*Director of Computing and Multimedia,  
Methodist Ladies' College*



## Using technology to enhance learning

As one of the first schools in the world to introduce notebook computers for all students from Year 5 to 12, Methodist Ladies' College takes the issue of learning and technology seriously and is internationally recognized as a leader in using technology to enhance learning.

Leon Guss, Director of Computing and Multimedia at MLC confirms that a notebook's versatility and portability was the most important feature the College required in its fleet of notebooks. "At MLC, we believe that the flexibility of notebook computers offers strong benefits for our students."

Unlike a corporate environment where a notebook PC will be set up and used at a single location then taken home at night; at school, a notebook PC will be used at a myriad of locations – classroom, library, science labs, outdoors and home - and carried around in a school bag at other times. Leon affirms that MLC's priority is to provide students with the opportunity for learning everywhere, anytime and in any place. "This type of notebook use necessitates a durable and hard working unit for our students", says Leon.

MLC operates a fleet of some 2,200 notebook PCs for students and staff. Each year, approximately one third of this fleet is replaced with new models, giving a three year lifetime for the equipment. In 2002, a replacement contract was awarded to Fujitsu PC, with the LifeBook S6110 notebook.

Leon and his team found that the decision making process was decidedly straightforward. "Fujitsu PC offered us a product that met all of our unique requirements as well as the high level of service and support that we needed. A financially competitive bid was also submitted and we were confident in Fujitsu's global reputation."

The importance of service in this contract cannot be understated. As MLC staff and students rely completely on their notebooks, a Fujitsu PC hardware engineer works onsite to meet their technical and service needs. A complete stock of spare parts is also available onsite. A service level agreement ensures 24 hour turnaround for repairs.

With twelve years' experience of MLC's notebook program, Leon and his colleagues are well versed on what makes an ideal notebook for students and staff. As Leon explains, it's not just a simple matter of comparing specs.

For a start, MLC's specification requirements proved difficult for many vendors to meet. For the convenience of young users, the target weight for each unit is a relatively low 2kg. This may not seem too pressing a requirement, however, each unit must be physically robust and include a built-in CD ROM drive.



Since an increasing number of learning resources are available on CD ROMs, the CD drive is critical. As such, carrying an external unit around is not only inconvenient but can also have a negative impact on the system's overall reliability.

Other target specifications included wireless networking and the availability of FireWire for digital video transfer and editing - an increasingly important aspect of MLC's curriculum. Digital video is the new medium for the expression of a student's learning, while wireless networking is integral to flexible learning environments and the use of network resources and the College's intranet.

MLC has also learned a great deal about the ergonomics, construction and suitability of notebook computers. Such issues as I/O ports and sockets should be recessed but not covered (covers and plastic doors are likely to break off); hinges and latches on the case must be particularly tough to withstand constant use, certain types of keyboards last longer and better than others, and Trackpads are more reliable and comfortable for day long use than other pointing devices.

All these requirements add up to an unusual package and the 1.9kg Fujitsu PC LifeBook S6110 equipped with CD ROM, a 40GB hard disk, Firewire and wireless networking capabilities offered MLC the ideal mix of technology, reliability and size.

In the end though, for Leon Guss and the College's community of notebook users, it isn't about having a sleek computer or the 24 hour turnaround service time.

"We firmly believe that technology enhances learning for our students", says Leon, "but learning can only occur if the technology actually works. We've already seen a decline in warranty repairs and I am confident that Fujitsu PC's continuing support will help us to enhance the high standard of education and learning that we offer our students."

And that was exactly what the LifeBook offering from Fujitsu PC managed to achieve. As a result, the company was successful in being awarded the tender in 2003 for the notebook program at MLC a second year round. The new LifeBook S6120 offered everything that the LifeBook S6110 featured as well as an enhanced processor, and was implemented into the curriculum in 2004.



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