

Case study: Independence University

Location: Salt Lake City, Utah

Providing the right tech and nationwide implementation for higher education

How Best Buy Education® fulfills one online university's student tech requirements while helping to save money.



Client

Independence University is a non-profit, accredited online university that belongs to a family of colleges and universities with educational roots dating back to 1891, featuring a broad range of programs comprised of four schools: the School of Healthcare, the School of Business, the School of Technology and the School of Graphic Arts. Independence University offers associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees, with a focus on accelerated learning, flexible course schedules and personalized attention from professional instructors.

“Working with Best Buy Education has made things very easy. The relationship outdoes the previous relationships we’ve had with other vendors. It has been absolutely amazing what [Best Buy] has been able to do for us.”

- Joe Dunlop, MBA, Associate Director at Independence University

Challenge

Historically, Independence University had always provided laptops to their online students once they were enrolled. However, due to the number of tech devices and the frequency in which IU had to deploy, it became obvious that it was simply not sustainable, as it was too expensive and incorporated inefficient redundancies that needed to be addressed.



Solution

In September of 2015, Joe Dunlop, Independence University's Associate Director, began researching a tech alternative and possible supplier. As he explains, “I dropped into our local Best Buy® store and saw that Insignia tablets were exactly what students needed for their initial coursework, and they were well within our budget. So I told the Sales Associate my requirements; and that I needed one thousand of these every month. She put me into contact with a Best Buy Education account manager, and they were able to begin the first tablet fulfillment, saving us approximately one million dollars that first year, with a same average savings each year since.”

Working with Eddie Spillsbury, the Best Buy Education Account Manager eventually assigned to Joe, they were able to conduct discussions on campus to come up with a series of solutions that didn't yet exist at the time. They went beyond tablets and into laptop deployment with a substantial cost-savings benefit that competitors simply couldn't match, resulting in Independence University seeing a 20% YoY growth, with a projected 28% for 2018.

Project At a Glance

Device Fulfillment: IU saved \$1M the first year of the program, with same average savings each year.

Fulfillment & Deployment: IU experienced a 20% YoY growth, with a projected 28% for 2018.

Streamlining Solutions & Automated Processing: Automated order processing eliminates redundancies, and enables Geek Squad® City to complete customized imaging and software for direct-shipping to students.

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What has evolved is a streamlined program whereby each student receives a tablet shipped directly to him or her from Geek Squad® City upon enrollment. Geek Squad images all tablets specifically for Independence University, and includes its own help desk and number and IT support, supplemented by 24-hour on-site HP support to a student's home in what's known as the HP care pack. After the first three months of general coursework is completed, known as the attrition period, the student is then shipped out a laptop, with the tablet kept by the student as part of their tuition. "It is all part of the package," says Eddie. "So, though it may seem like it's more expensive to order two different technologies, there's actually a significant cost savings that's attached during the attrition period. The university only ships out laptops to those still enrolled in their respective programs, rather than blanket ship a certain number that becomes inventory."

Another benefit of the program was the creation of an automated system for the ordering process: "It began with tablets, and now we are in the process of automating laptops," Joe explains. "How it used to work is, for each new student, the admission consultants would send individual emails to the financial planner, who would physically prepare a list of names and addresses that would then go to the business office. They would duplicate a list and create a purchase order that would go out for fulfillment. That information would be entered into a spreadsheet, then sent back so IU could enter that information into their student database or system. It was a lot of hands-on duplicating processes." Joe continues, "The current process allows the financial planners to enter the students' information themselves; accounting will pull up the report for approval. Once approved, Geek Squad City receives the information electronically to fulfill the order that is then shipped directly to the student throughout the United States. Geek Squad City sends a confirmation back to IU and the process is complete. It's now possible for an order—anywhere from one unit to hundreds—to be fulfilled and in the mail in as little as 3 hours. Also, any order problems encountered can now be detected right away compared to the past. These processes ensure that new students have a great onboarding experience."



Geek Squad® City in Brooks, KY has more than 700 highly trained Agents working nearly 'round the clock to ensure the job is done right and shipped out hassle-free.



Geek Squad Agents installing custom configuration of software and imaging on multiple computers at one time.

"They [Independence University] became so impressed with how fast Best Buy Education® could fulfill their requests...now a much larger capability is there, with the resources to make it happen for higher education institutions."

- Eddie Spillsbury, Sr. Account Manager, Best Buy Education

Long-term relationship

Best Buy Education and Independence University have enjoyed an ongoing partnership rooted in mutual trust, with a long-term sustainability through their fulfillment program.

In addition, a selection queue has been implemented, whereby students can go to order printers, cables and any other tech they might need directly from Best Buy. It's a program that has grown 18% YoY by providing such a service to students.

The relationship also gives Best Buy Education the opportunity to showcase what Geek Squad is able to do and how they can support higher education. Many institutions go directly to the manufacturer without knowing Best Buy Education has the customizable programs and support as is present with Independence University to help save them money. Best Buy Education has the ability to go in and leverage the Best Buy brand to offer a better deal, greater choice and years of experience. Also, the relationship has expanded to community outreach efforts, donating used or fixed technology. Examples of such efforts include Salt Lake City VA Fisher House and the local Salt Lake school district. If IU no longer has a use for older tech or tech that needs to be replaced with newer tech, they ensure it gets donated, helping individuals who want to get back into the workforce, such as veterans and those more challenged in school.

