

Microsoft Case Study: Promoting Computer Literacy



Kenyan School Boosts Enrollment 400 Percent, Doubles Instruction Time, with Refurbished PCs

Overview

Country or Region: Kenya

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Naivasha Polytechnic, founded in 1982, is located in Naivasha town, outside Nairobi, Kenya. It provides vocational and commercial training to less-privileged youth and others.

Business Situation

Naivasha Polytechnic added computer studies to its curriculum in 1995. It became so popular that the school could not afford computers for an expanded program to accommodate more students.

Solution

The school teamed up with Computers 4 Africa, a UK-based charity, to meet its need with low-cost, high-quality refurbished PCs.

Benefits

- PC-trained students earn 100% more than peers
- Program enrollment up 400 percent
- Doubles student time on PCs
- PC quality is key to program success

“Computer literacy is a requirement for all the better jobs in Kenya. With the help of Computers 4 Africa, we have qualified more students for these jobs.”

Joseph Kamau, Head Teacher, Naivasha Polytechnic

In much of the world, closing the economic divide requires first closing the digital divide. That’s the case in Kenya, where Naivasha Polytechnic is arming students with the computer skills they need to get good jobs and even start their own businesses. Spurring the program’s success are the refurbished PCs that the school gets from Digital Pipeline (working as Computers 4 Africa), a Microsoft Registered Refurbisher. With the high-quality, low-cost machines, the school has increased training time per student by 100 percent, even as it’s quadrupled enrollment. Graduates can earn twice as much as those without computer skills, and the school is distributing the low-cost PCs throughout the country, helping to fund a new dormitory to house 120 students.



Buying new computers—let alone buying new computers every few years, as schools in the developed world might do—was out of the question.

Situation

When Naivasha Polytechnic was founded outside Nairobi, Kenya in 1982, “Polytechnic” meant masonry and dressmaking—the first two courses taught at the fledgling school. They were soon joined by courses in mechanics, carpentry, welding, and secretarial studies. That made perfect sense for a school dedicated to education with a purpose: training Kenyans for jobs that would improve their lives and, by extension, help spur the economic development of their country.

It was inevitable that computer studies would join the curriculum and it did, in 1995. The program was begun with three—eventually 10—donated personal computers. While the PCs were sufficient to introduce Naivasha Polytechnic students to the basics, including some graphics and accounting uses, the students’ needs quickly outgrew the school’s resources. With 50 students in the computer program, the 5:1 PC-to-student ratio left each student with just one hour of computer time per day. Additional students couldn’t be accommodated. And rapidly-evolving software soon became too resource-intensive for the machines, keeping students from learning the applications, and gaining the skills, that would make them most useful to potential employers.

Buying new computers—let alone buying new computers every few years, as schools in the developed world might do—was out of the question, according to Simon Kinyanjui, Director of Naivasha Polytechnic. Small wonder: A modestly equipped desktop PC—say, a dual-core machine with 2GB RAM and an 18.5-inch monitor—can cost US\$550, while per capita annual income isn’t much higher, at \$840, according to UNICEF.

The school also had other, seemingly unrelated, challenges. Its ability to accept students was limited, in part, by the dormitory facilities in which it could house them. The school had a series of corrugated-metal accommodations and, for 15 years, had been trying to raise the funds for better, and more extensive, facilities.

Solution

Naivasha Polytechnic began to solve its PC problem when it met Computers 4 Africa, a UK-based charity dedicated to helping improve the lives of people in Africa by equipping the next generation to work in the global environment. “We do this by supplying the best-value computers in the areas where we operate,” says Morgan Hopkins, Head of Beneficiary Management for the organization. To date, Computers 4 Africa has provided more than 50,000 PCs to schools and communities in more than 20 African countries.

How can Naivasha Polytechnic afford computers from Computers 4 Africa when locally available machines cost most of a year’s salary? The answer is PC refurbishment. Computers 4 Africa PCs are donated by businesses and organizations throughout the UK, which meet their PC asset disposition needs without incurring the traditional cost and complexity.

Computers 4 Africa, a Microsoft Registered Refurbisher, then puts the machines through an intensive process designed to maximize their value to their future owners. It checks PCs for functionality and electrical safety, securely wipes all disks of data, thoroughly cleans the machines, supplies donors with data wipe certificates upon request, replaces peripherals and components as needed, performs cosmetic enhancements, and loads fully licensed versions of Windows 7 and other software. Computers 4 Africa is a carbon-neutral

Naivasha Polytechnic uses refurbished PCs to run three computer classes a day for more than 200 students.

organization—in addition to the inherent environmental benefits of PC refurbishment—which makes its PC refurbishment a sound ecological, as well as economic, choice.

Computers 4 Africa and Naivasha Polytechnic began working together in 2010. The school now trains its students on about 100 PCs from the refurbisher. The computers are relatively well-equipped, many with dual-core processors, 1-2GB RAM, graphics processors, and 80GB hard disks, and costing about \$100—less than 20 percent of the cost of a new, PC.

The school uses the Computers 4 Africa PCs to train its students on a broader and more

up-to-date curriculum than was possible with the older machines. Courses now include programming, hardware and software engineering, networking, and installation.

Beyond training its students on up-to-date equipment, Naivasha Polytechnic also saw an inventive way to use the refurbished PCs to address its housing needs: the school became a reseller of Computers 4 Africa PCs. It has supplied more than 3,000 PCs to more than 30 schools throughout Kenya—so computer studies students throughout the country are benefitting much like their counterparts at Naivasha Polytechnic. With the proceeds, it has invested in new, permanent housing for its students. The two-story brick dormitory, now under construction, will ultimately serve 144 students.

Benefits

Through its use of Computers 4 Africa PCs, Naivasha Polytechnic has increased enrollment in its computer program even as it increases the amount of computer instruction that each student receives. PC quality is a bedrock of the program, and graduates can earn twice as much as those without PC training.

PC-Trained Students Earn 100 Percent More than Peers

The school wants to do everything possible to prepare its students for employment. Training them on up-to-date PCs that run current applications gives those students the best shot at good jobs when they graduate.

“Computer literacy is a requirement for all the better jobs in Kenya,” says Joseph Kamau, Head Teacher at the school. “With the help of Computers 4 Africa, we’ve been able to qualify more students for these jobs. We’re not just teaching them to use





Naivasha Polytechnic is building new student housing with the proceeds from its sale of refurbished PCs to other Kenyan schools.

computers; we're helping lay the foundations for more successful careers and lifetime earnings."

Kamau estimates that the school's computer studies graduates can get starting salaries of about KES10,000 (\$114) per month—more than twice the KES4,500 (\$51) average monthly starting salary for those without computer skills. And the school's graduates also have another option that's not as available to those without computer skills: entrepreneurship.

"Several of our graduates are self-employed," says Kamau. "It's a great opportunity for them, and it contributes to the economy. Everyone benefits."

Program Enrollment up 400 Percent, Doubles Student Time on PCs

Naivasha Polytechnic has used the Computers 4 Africa PCs to increase the number of PCs at the school, thereby reducing the PC-to-student ratio by 60 percent, from 5:1 to 2:1. The school puts

the reduced ratio to good use, giving each student more computer time than was possible before. Where students used to have an hour of computer time per day, they now train on the PCs for two or more hours per day.

Beyond giving students more time on the computers, Naivasha Polytechnic has also used the Computers 4 Africa PCs to increase the total number of students it can train at any one time. The computer program now serves 215 students, 400 percent as many as the 50 students served previously.

And with Naivasha Polytechnic distributing Computers 4 Africa PCs throughout Kenya, the benefits are also being multiplied across the country. The refurbisher estimates that 32 students will be trained on each machine over the course of five years, which puts the total number of students benefitting from the PCs over that time at about 64,000.

PC Quality is Key to Program Success

One key to the benefits that Naivasha Polytechnic and the other schools get from the refurbished PCs is their quality. Kinyanjui, the school director, hadn't used refurbished PCs prior to the Computers 4 Africa relationship. The price of the PCs was great but, in order for them to be useful, the quality had to be great, too. Fortunately, it is.

"We now have experience with the Computers 4 Africa PCs both as consumers and as suppliers to others," he says. "We appreciate their reliability and our customers do, too. They perform as well as we'd expect new PCs to do."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:
www.microsoft.com

For more information about Computers 4 Africa products and services, visit the website at: www.computers4africa.org.uk

For more information about Naivasha Polytechnic, visit the website at: <http://www.natetikenya.com/>

Microsoft Refurbisher Programs

The Microsoft Registered Refurbisher program is for small and medium sized refurbishers who want to join other refurbishers around the world in providing professionally refurbished PCs preinstalled with genuine Microsoft products.

The Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher program is for large refurbishers headquartered worldwide who meet a minimum average threshold of 1,000 PCs shipped per month. Refurbishers in the program professionally refurbish desktop and laptop computers and servers with genuine Microsoft software. Windows 7 plus Windows Live Services and Microsoft Security Essentials provides a complete refurbished PC solution at a great value.

For more information on the Microsoft refurbisher programs, visit the website at: <http://www.microsoft.com/refurbishedpcs/Programs.aspx>