

CASE STUDY

Barker College

Multi-factor Authentication

Mr James Stewart, Head of ICT

The **race** to multi-factor identification

The team at Barker College had been discussing how to implement Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) across their four campuses for 18 months – but couldn't find a solution that met their user experience requirements.

'The challenge we faced was: how do we improve our security to the highest level, without placing an extra load on our teachers or interrupting the teaching and learning environment?' says Mr James Stewart, Barker's Head of ICT.

However, late in 2021, the school's insurance company mandated that they had to have MFA implemented by the end of year to maintain compliance.

The project went from high importance to critical – with a tight timeline to match.

'We were coming out of lockdown, and there was every chance we'd have to teach through lockdowns again in 2022,' Mr Stewart says.

'If we got this wrong, people wouldn't be able to access their online resources, staff wouldn't be able to teach, and we would not function.'

Client Profile

Mr James Stewart
Head of ICT
Barker College



- An independent K-12 school serving over 3,000 students and up to 1,000 staff, over 4 campuses.
- The main campus is in Hornsby, on Sydney's upper North Shore.
- Three indigenous campuses located in the Central Coast, Lower Hunter and East Arnhem Land.

To be confident Barker's systems could run smoothly and securely under any circumstances, including fully off-campus operations with remote learning, the project had to be delivered before teachers left for holidays in December – giving the team only eight weeks to deliver a sophisticated MFA solution.

The importance of **reliable** MFA

For Mr Stewart and his team, delivering the right MFA system to the Barker community was about more than just compliance. With students from all backgrounds growing, learning and changing

together at school, Barker's data systems contain personal information about each child's journey. Information the Barker team was (and is) determined to protect.

'It is an absolute requirement that our students feel safe when they come to school,' Mr Stewart explains. 'Education thrives in a safe environment. Students need to be able to be and express themselves in a trusted, safe and supportive environment. That means it is our duty to protect the information that is entrusted to us by our students, and their parents.'

Enter NetStrategy

After reaching out to some trusted partners in the industry, one clear leader for the project emerged.

'There was a clear differentiation between NetStrategy and the other companies,' Mr Stewart says. 'Their solution was not only the most complete technical solution. It was also the solution that best took into account the required user experience and the tight timeline we were facing. They provided a high degree of confidence that they could deliver what we needed.'

As NetStrategy presented two solutions and began to guide the Barker ICT team through the proposed strategy, Mr Stewart and his team knew they were in the right hands.

'We originally had an internal lack of clarity about what the best pathway forward was – and this clarity was rapidly given to us by NetStrategy,' Mr Stewart says. 'It was a major sense of relief.'

A seamless transition

After workshopping the two options presented by NetStrategy, it became clear that using Cisco's Duo platform was the best way forward.

'It's completely cross-platform. It works across every online application, both cloud and onsite, and on every mobile device. Plus, it's an easy onboarding process for all our staff, and we're able to automate the system as staff come and go.'

The location-sensitive solution allows for heightened security for staff and students, without interrupting the teaching and learning environment.

'When we released the update, we only had to respond directly to about 2% of our staff, and of these queries, all were easy challenges to overcome. It was a seamless process,' Mr Stewart says. 'Within one day, we'd transferred across.'

For Mr Stewart and his team, having the school's day to day business continue post-update 'as if nothing had happened' was the greatest success of all.

'This project has been one of the most successful projects we've ever done in the ICT department here at Barker College. We're proud of the project, and we hope that NetStrategy are too.'

With another project already in the works, there's a long and exciting partnership ahead for Barker College and NetStrategy.

For more information, book your free 90 minute consultation.

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