



Killeen Independent School District Gives WS_FTP Server with Web Transfer Module an “A”

Case Study

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Company

Killeen Independent School District (KISD)

Industry

Education

Business Challenge

KISD needed to allow users to easily upload and download files and to create and delete folders on their remote server without having to install any software on users' computers.

Outcome

KISD added the WS_FTP® Server Web Transfer Module to their WS_FTP Server product to transfer files among computers and district servers using the convenience of a Web browser.

Company Background

The largest school district between Austin and Dallas, Killeen Independent School District (KISD) employs 5,800 teachers and support personnel to serve its over 50 campuses of nearly 40,000 students. In its support of the district, KISD Technology Services faces each day with a single purpose: to meet the information needs of the students and staff throughout the region to the highest level of satisfaction possible.

KISD Technology Services has used WS_FTP for many years to securely share files, data, and other critical business information among its users as transparently as possible, and they recently added the web transfer module to their WS_FTP Server installation to allow users to easily upload and download files and to create and delete folders on the remote server without having to install any software on users' computers. “There’s no way I could support the district on a site-by-site basis,” says Steven Robertson, KISD UNIX System Administrator. “WS_FTP Server Web Transfer Module is the key; if the web client is structured properly all the administration goes away. I can emulate what’s needed for the entire district, making it look to a single district like they’re the only site touching a particular piece of hardware. So if you’re at school A, I can place you in the directory for that school alone. But if there’s an administrator who needs to see more than that one school, it’s done through a feature of the web transfer module called virtual folder.”

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Steven Robertson
UNIX System Administrator, KISD

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With the WS_FTP Server Web Transfer Module, server administrators define who is authorized to connect to WS_FTP Server. Once an end user has accessed WS_FTP Server with their browser, all of their account settings, permissions, and privileges for their account on WS_FTP Server are automatically applied to the web transfer module. As a result, the user can access only the appropriate account, files, folders, and virtual folders just as if they connected with traditional desktop file transfer client software like WS_FTP Professional. “It emulates the actual campus and allows access to only those folders that a certain individual needs,” says Robertson. “For instance, I can create a group for the school nurses so that they can see the entire structure of the physical campuses. They have a different set of rights, based on what student is at what campus.”

KISD’s original motivation for choosing WS_FTP was to add another layer of secure internet correspondence within the district. “When you look at the data we’ve got out there - grades, counseling records, and other ‘eyes-only’ material - it’s amazing how sensitive our information actually is,” notes Robertson. “Of course, besides WS_FTP’s security and encryption abilities, its easy implementation, rapid deployment, and world-class support were the hallmarks for us.

“We had the ability to do encryption in-house but we wanted something that would be scalable and would have Enterprise support if the individual who designed the in-house software left,” Robertson continues. “We wanted to make sure that whatever solution we went with could be supported in the future. There’s a standardization we’re trying to move to. When schools decide to build home-grown applications there’s a lack of documentation which causes each school to be configured differently. We’ve run into major issues at certain sites with schools who went their own way. So standardization helps us enforce policy across the board. If something happened to me tomorrow, everything that was related to file transfer would already be in place thanks to WS_FTP Server.”

Because WS_FTP easily integrates with the Microsoft Active Directory® database for end user authentication, KISD can specify any number of user groups to allow only the appropriate users to authenticate. “Active Directory drives everything we do,” says Robertson. “It allows me to manage 6800 individual accounts across the entire enterprise. That’s important because someone could be in one district today and another tomorrow. Having WS_FTP allows us to meet that challenge through the integration with Active Directory. WS_FTP allows me to import the user IDs from the Active Directory structure to the server. It cuts down on our training time and gives everyone the security they need. All the data that’s unique to you follows you wherever you are.”

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The scalability of the product is another reason KISD chose WS_FTP Web Transfer Module. “We currently support about 40,000 individuals and we’re just below 7,000 users, says Robertson. “We’re pushing about 18% of our population and at some point we may decide to set up more external-facing FTP servers for the district, which would be simple. Setting up six more FTP servers would be a matter of minutes. We’re finding that there’s a need to transfer information among school districts in the state; we can set that up with the web transfer module and it would be easy, transparent, and scalable.”

In describing his experience with Ipswitch File Transfer, Robertson is pleased with both the file transfer product line and the support he’s received through the years. “My history with Ipswitch goes back to about 1993, and the original products were so solid back then that with the improvements they’ve made all along the way, I’m not surprised I’m still with them. We know who these guys are and we know their reputation. Ipswitch wants our opinion on what works and what doesn’t work so they can advance the product. Their flexibility and their adaptability are what sets them apart from other players in the industry. They listen to user feedback – and they implement it.”

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