



# Singapore tertiary institution streamlines teaching and learning with cloud-based solutions

Customer

Republic Polytechnic

Partner

AvePoint

Products and Services

Azure Active Directory

Microsoft 365 Apps for enterprise

Microsoft Stream

Office 365

OneDrive for Business Online

SharePoint Online

Yammer

Industry

Higher Education

Organization Size

Large (1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Country

Singapore

August 2, 2017



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Republic Polytechnic aims to provide a technologically up-to-date learning environment that supports self-paced, individualized education. The institute replaced an aging learning management system (LMS) composed of multiple disconnected components with a new LMS built on Microsoft Office 365. The new system, LEO 2.0, centralizes all education-related data and functionality, making it easier for lecturers, students, and administrators to access the information and features they need to succeed in their roles.



# Technology challenges for higher education

Located in Singapore, Republic Polytechnic provides its 15,000 students with 41 diploma programs across seven schools and one academic center. The institute emphasizes the cultivation of problem-solving skills and a lifelong approach to learning. The curriculum takes a holistic approach to education, with the goal of turning students into successful, respected professionals who are also passionate and involved citizens.

Achieving those goals in the rapidly changing 21st century can be a challenge. Republic Polytechnic aims to address that challenge by offering personalized learning based on students' individual progress, so they can learn at their own pace. The institute also recognizes that students' learning needs are changing quickly, so academic programs and technologies must be implemented with an eye to the future. "Our students are digital natives," says Neo Yong Chiang, Chief Information Officer at Republic Polytechnic. "They are very familiar with things like instant messaging, wikis, and online discussions. In order to prepare them for their future workplaces, we want to give them access to those same technologies while they are in school."

To provide high-quality education, lecturers also need access to technologies that help them deliver effective, personalized instruction. However, the tools in place at Republic Polytechnic were not making that easy. The institute was using a suite of learning management systems (LMSs) that had been developed in-house in 2004. These tools were not integrated. They also posed problems for educators. "We had different LMSs for coursework, internships, final-year projects, and portfolio development, and lecturers and students had to hop between different systems to complete all of their work," explains Neo. "In addition to being time-consuming, it was difficult for lecturers to get a good overall picture of student progress with data spread across different locations."



## Replacing many systems with one tailored solution

Republic Polytechnic began looking for a better way of doing things. The institute decided to replace its multiple legacy LMSs with a single integrated LMS that would offer a better experience for both lecturers and students. "We wanted a system that would match up with the overall smart-campus digital learning experience we try to provide," says Neo. "We were also looking for a solution that is modern, intelligent, and mobile-friendly."

After evaluating a number of commercial, off-the-shelf products, Republic Polytechnic chose to implement a custom-built solution based on the Microsoft Office 365 suite of hosted productivity applications. The institute felt that this would provide a more flexible system that would be tailored to its needs and designed to work well both now and in the future. In addition, Republic Polytechnic was already using Microsoft SharePoint and Skype for Business, so adding another Microsoft solution was a good fit for the existing IT ecosystem.

To build its new solution, Republic Polytechnic enlisted the help of the global cloud experts at AvePoint, a Microsoft partner. AvePoint worked with the institute through all phases of the project, from requirement gathering and analysis to solution design and implementation. The relationship proved to be a great one. "A

vendor specializing in Microsoft technologies, who are creative and constructive, and have helped us pick the right components. Their unique global team brought a wide range of expertise that resulted in a comprehensive solution for our institution.” says Neo.

The collaboration between Republic Polytechnic and AvePoint resulted in the creation of a new integrated solution called Learning Environment Online, or LEO 2.0. The solution is built on top of Office 365 and brings together all the technologies that the institute uses for teaching and learning, including Office 365 Video used for video storage and streaming, SharePoint Online for document storage and collaboration, Yammer and Skype for Business for communication, OneDrive for Business for personal storage, and Azure Active Directory for user authentication.

“By building LEO 2.0 on top of Office 365, we centralized all information and access points for students, lecturers, and staff into one platform,” says Luke Lim, Singapore Country Manager for AvePoint. “This simplifies system maintenance and creates a common process for setting up and managing enrollment, accounts, permissions, reporting, and the user experience.”

## Enjoying a streamlined solution

Students, lecturers, and administrators are all enjoying the benefits of LEO 2.0. For students, the new system integrate the digital tools—like Skype for business—that they are accustomed to using in their daily lives. They are also strengthening their proficiency with Office 365 productivity tools that they are likely to use in their future workplaces. With LEO 2.0, the institute is also able to provide students with a more differentiated, personalized learning experience through the adaptive release of lesson content. Ease of use is another key benefit. “It is easy to navigate within the system, and everything I need to handle my daily tasks as a student is consolidated in a single place,” says Diniy, a Republic Polytechnic student.

Marilyn, another Republic Polytechnic student, appreciates the convenience of using a cloud-based solution: “We have easy access to our learning

materials from a common repository whenever necessary, as long as we have an internet connection.”

By using a comprehensive LMS with powerful built-in functionality, lecturers are better connected and engaged. They can collaborate more easily with each other and build closer bonds with students. “Lecturers can now learn alongside students as they work through problems together with a group, and lecturers can more easily interact and share information with each other,” explains Lim. “As a result, teacher-student relationships and the quality of teaching improves. Lecturers also have a much easier time tracking and analyzing student progress across coursework, internships, projects, and portfolio work.”

Because LEO 2.0 centralizes functionality and interfaces smoothly with the institute’s other IT systems, it is now much easier for administrators and IT staff to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. “Administrators not only save time managing institutional data—they also have the ability to deliver better data analysis and trend reports for leadership,” says Lim. “And using our Azure-based AvePoint Online Services, IT staff can easily manage, protect, and restore information across the environment and provision in-policy services for all users.”

Benefits even extend beyond the work done on campus. “The new solution is helping us forge a closer relationship with our industry partners,” says Neo. “Many of our students are placed with them every year in internships. Partners can now evaluate interns and provide feedback directly into LEO 2.0 with built-in external user access, which is much more convenient than it was in the past, which was through emails.”

Republic Polytechnic feels that LEO 2.0 will help the institute deliver a solid, personalized education to all its students for years to come. With the future integration of analytics tools, lecturers will be able to understand the student learning behavior and strategize the students’ learning needs. The future integration of Chatbot will be able to serve as a teaching assistant, answering questions related to everything a student needs to know about academic matters.

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