



GLOBAL LEARNING SEMESTERS

Business: GLS designs and operates innovative university-level study abroad programs primarily for students from the United States and Canada.

Prior Solution: Hosted email without Microsoft Exchange® or mobile support

Current Solution: USA.NET
Hosted Exchange and Hosted Mobility Solutions

Number of Employees: 20

Number of Mobile Users: 10

What's the greatest benefit of hosting with USA.NET?

"Mobile collaboration features and total reliability"

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GLOBAL LEARNING SEMESTERS: FROM SHANGHAI TO SPAIN, STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM STAYS CONNECTED

For a few weeks out of the year, Todd Livesay's job keeps him up at night. As university relations manager for Global Learning Semesters, a unique academic study abroad program affiliated with the University of Nicosia, he is the primary contact for all program students and their parents. At the start of each semester, 100-150 students all fly from North America to foreign destinations – at once.

"As you can imagine with international travel, anything can happen," Livesay said. "Planes are delayed, luggage is lost, or students miss their flights. We have to communicate immediately with students, parents and program coordinators in the arrival cities to ensure someone is there to pick them up as soon as they arrive. I wouldn't be able to do my job without the ability to forward messages from any location to anywhere at any time."

Approximately 190,000 American students study abroad each year—and those numbers are growing by about 10 percent annually. With hundreds of study abroad programs available, it's become quite a competitive field. Yet few programs offer the truly global experience of Global Learning Semesters (GLS).

GLS provides an unparalleled combination of high academic standards and educational travel. During a summer or semester abroad, a GLS student might travel from a host location to 25 international cities to experience first-hand the places, people and institutions they are studying.

Staff and program managers at GLS are spread out across several U.S. states and at eight host locations: Nicosia (Cyprus), London, Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, Guadalajara, San Ignacio (Belize) and Shanghai. Yet they rarely stay in one place for long.

"Relative to our size, we are as distributed as we can possibly be, with 20 people in 9 or 10 locations," said Antonis Polemitis, president of GLS. "We're constantly in motion, so email is our lifeline."

REAL-TIME MOBILE COLLABORATION

In the past, GLS' email service lacked the mobile communications capabilities to support the team's global needs. As staff coordinate with each other, travel and educational partners, students or parents, they need reliable communication across countries and time zones.

On average, Livesay travels 25 percent of the time to college fairs and international program locations. In the past, he relied on his laptop for email communications. However, he found himself constantly searching for wi-fi locations when on the road, and then booting up his laptop took 5-10 minutes.

“There’s no doubt that USA.NET Exchange Email with Mobility Services increases productivity. We can still work when we’re out of the office, which eliminates delays in getting back to each other, and to students and parents.”

*- Antonis Polemitis
President, GLS*

To keep its small IT staff focused on other projects, GLS chose a hosted email provider. However, the vendor lacked support for Microsoft® Exchange or Blackberry®. The limited mobile functionality required GLS staff members to dock to download updates manually—not a very convenient approach when in constantly changing overseas environments.

The organization then migrated to USA.NET Hosted Exchange and Mobility Services to expand its collaboration capabilities with features such as synchronized email, shared calendaring, a company directory and wireless mobile messaging with Blackberry and ActiveSync® for Windows Mobile® devices. That gives GLS a complete email solution without the need to purchase hardware, software or a mobility server.

With USA.NET, GLS also has a reliable solution with high-touch support. USA.NET provides certified mobility experts on call 24x7—a critical feature with GLS team members spread across time zones. The solution also includes a high level of security so critical to protecting GLS’ private information when using mobile devices on public networks.

EMPOWERED TO STAY RESPONSIVE AND PRODUCTIVE

Using USA.NET services, GLS staff access their contacts, calendars and email, including attachments, in real time, either at their desks or with a wireless device. Syncing takes place automatically, freeing the team from the need to dock frequently for updates. Whether they are in Shanghai or Spain, staff stay connected to information to ensure they remain productive and responsive. Instead of waiting until they return to the office or find wi-fi, they can send and receive emails regarding travel plans, host universities or specific students while traveling.

“Blackberry has become an absolute necessity for staying responsive to students and parents,” Livesay said. “If I have half an hour before a flight leaves, I can quickly send a few emails. Sometimes that means I respond a full day sooner than I would previously.”

As a result, GLS programs run more smoothly as well as more safely. The team can communicate without disruptive delays during any emergency situation. The 24/7/365 availability of USA.NET support also provides a higher level of reliability that increases peace of mind for Polemitis.

“There’s no doubt that USA.NET mobile messaging increases productivity,” Polemitis said. “We can still work when we’re out of the office, which eliminates delays in getting back to each other, and to students and parents.”

“Mobile email lets us respond faster, which puts students and parents at ease,” Livesay added. “We communicate through all the crazy changes in international travel. The students have a look of giant relief on their faces when they walk out of the airport and see us standing there waiting for them.”

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