Information & Communications Technology Program
Press Release Summary

Topic: Networking manufacturer collaborates with local college to give future technicians a head start in the Networking and Audio/Video industry.

Professor William Saichek, ICT Program Coordinator; Jason Gibson, Pakedge Regional Account Executive and Dr. Dennis Harkins, President, Orange Coast College

Details:

In 2010, 24-year-old Jason Gibson worked at U-Haul, managing 70 dealer locations in Orange County, California. He had a passion for technology: his nickname in high school was "the IT guy" and he constantly read tech magazines to bring himself up to speed on the latest technological advances.

That year, he took his first class in the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) program at Orange Coast College (OCC), a community college based in Costa Mesa, California. This first class prepared Jason for an A+ certification so that he could prove competency as a computer technician. The course was so useful that soon Jason found himself back at the school working towards his CCNA certification.

Just a year after his very first class in the ICT program, Jason was hired to become an account executive at Pakedge Device and Software Inc., a California-based manufacturing company that specializes in enterprise-level networking products. Since then, he has risen to the role of regional account manager, overseeing all accounts in the entire U.S. and training new account executives to become regional managers themselves.

Jason credits his current position, in part, from his participation in the program. In fact, he still takes the occasional ICT course at Orange Coast College to keep his technical knowledge as up-to-date as possible.

Grateful for all the opportunities he has been given, Jason decided to give back to the school. After a discussion with upper-level executives from his company, Jason was able to arrange a major donation: Pakedge donated over $200,000 in networking hardware to the ICT Program as an effort to help students gain hands-on experience with the latest high performance systems. Students can then apply that knowledge in their future careers.

The donation included 10 routers, 24 network switches, 12 power controllers, 181 access points, and an access point controller. Nick Phillips, the Vice President of Sales at Pakedge, had this to say about the donation: "When Jason came to us with the idea, we were very supportive. In the A/V industry, IP networking technologies play an important role—more and more products are becoming Internet-enabled while services like Netflix are now deliverable through streaming. Today, there is a real shortage of trained network technicians who can design, manage and maintain these systems. We're always putting together training webinars and training classes for our dealers, but having the opportunity to educate and train a whole new pool of students who can enter this industry is a big deal. By supporting the ICT program at OCC, we can give more people like Jason a head start and open doors to fulfilling careers in a very dynamic industry."

The technology donated by Pakedge will provide Orange Coast College students with the unique opportunity to install, configure, and manage wireless controllers and access points in real-world environments.   The ICT Program coordinator, Professor William Saichek, calls the donation "a wonderful opportunity that few colleges have."

As for Jason, he plans to continue taking ICT courses in the future. "Sometimes I even take the same class more than once," he says. "It's a nice refresher because technology changes so quickly that you have to stay on top of what's current. That way, I can assist my clients with exactly what they need and understand the current technology they're using."

Pakedge Device & Software Inc.

"Pakedge is an industry leading manufacturer of high performance end-to-end networking platforms for residential and commercial A/V applications. Pakedge is recognized by industry peers and winner of the prestigious CEPro Brand Leader award for Networking in 2013 and 2014 and specializes in integrating high performance engineering innovations, operational simplicity, and systems engineering to develop technology that enables customers to unleash the power of their network."

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Information & Communications Technology Program at OCC:

In 2007, OCC joined the Convergence Technology Center, an NSF National Center Grant out of Collin College in Frisco, Texas to create and grow a new program in Convergence Technology.

The ICT Program began with two classes in computer operations and networking. Utilizing the model curriculum developed through the Convergence Technology Center, the program has quickly grown into 22 classes and 9 Certificates of Specialization. These classes are aligned with widely accepted industry certifications including CompTIA's A+ and Network+, Cisco's CCNA, VMware's VCP, EMC's Information and Storage Management, Microsoft's MCSE and LPA's Linux+. The ICT Program will enable students to acquire the skills needed to support the converged network that carries voice, data, image and video traffic.

The ICT Program is supported by organizations in the Orange County area through its Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT). The BILT consists of high-level executives and technicians, from large corporations and small companies alike, who understand the current state of the convergence industry and what skills get students hired. Pakedge will be joining the team in helping to guide the ICT Program in determining employer's needs in the workplace.

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