Hemsworth Arts & Community Academy

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Jim Kearton
Network Manager
Hemsworth Arts & Community Academy

Hemsworth Academy has deployed a FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 to support its estate of 50 virtual machines. It provides scalable, full-flash performance at low costs.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Education
Founded: 1547
Employees: 250
Website: www.hemsworthacademy.org

Challenge

When Hemsworth Academy's existing storage platform reached end of life, the school needed to find a new solution that would increase performance and scale as demand grew. However, it was limited by a strict budget.

Solution

The company turned to long-time IT partner Cutter Group, which recommended the FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250. Over the course of five days, Cutter performed a live, real-time migration, encompassing 50 virtual machines and 13 TB of data.

Benefit

■ Increased application performance by a factor of five for improved productivity and reduced user frustration

■ Affordable platform has multiple spare slots for future scalability at minimal cost

■ The Fujitsu solution is a quarter of the size of the previous storage device, freeing up space for other systems

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Customer

Hemsworth Arts & Community Academy is a mixed secondary school and sixth form located in Hemsworth in the City of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England. The school was first known as Hemsworth Grammar School, founded in 1547 by the Archbishop of York. Its Academy ethos is to do everything possible to enable the young people in its care to maximise their potential. The vast range of opportunities on offer for its 1,300+ students and the wider community is central to the school's success in promoting positive attitudes and lifelong learning.

Products and services

■ FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250

Challenge

For over seven years, Hemsworth Academy, had relied on a storage array that was no longer fit for purpose and reaching end of life. In the context of an extremely limited budget, the school needed to find a replacement that would provide the foundation for its IT infrastructure for many years to come.

"Reliability and performance had become real issues with the old technology – hard drives were failing more frequently and it wasn't particularly fast, which made users frustrated," explains Jim Kearton, Network Manager, Hemsworth Arts & Community Academy. "We had a meagre budget but we needed to improve performance, enable scalability and ensure stability. Going to a full SSD storage environment seemed like the best way forward but we weren't sure we could afford it."

The school has partnered for many years with local educational IT specialist Cutter Group, a market leader in the design, deployment and support of virtualised solutions in both the desktop and data centre environments. Most recently, Cutter Group had installed two FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2530 to host Hemsworth Academy's VMware platform with 50 virtual machines responsible for every on-site application. This successful deployment encouraged the school to look more closely at Fujitsu's storage offerings.

"Cutter Group did all the work for us, taking our specifications and requirements and coming back with the best solution within our price range: the FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250," adds Jim. "Furthermore, thanks to Fujitsu's generous pricing for schools, we could enjoy enterprise-class features and performance at a reasonable cost."

Solution

FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 is an incredibly fast and flexible all-flash storage system for the next-generation data centre. At an affordable price point, it is the ideal choice for Hemsworth Academy's application scenarios and delivers impressive IOPS performance with lowest latency even at full load.

Cutter Group shipped the new storage solution to the school with instructions on how it should be 'racked and stacked'. It then remotely commissioned the new platform and performed a live migration over the course of five days.

"Using VMware allowed Cutter Group to transition all our applications in real-time without service disruption to our 1,300 students and 200 staff members," continues Jim.

"In total 13 TB of data, relating to data security management, SQL, Microsoft Exchange and Active Directory, the management information system and many other critical functions, was migrated."

Benefit

Because the FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 is entirely flash-based, the performance out of the box is blisteringly fast. Response times are ultra-low – in fact, they set performance records. The Fujitsu solution is also built to be smart, with easily configurable automated quality of service to ensure each app gets the performance it needs, plus flexible deduplication and compression that can be turned on when required – and off when not.

"Our classroom management software, which allows us to monitor exactly what each student has been doing across our 1,000-strong PC estate, now runs five times faster. That increases productivity and reduces user frustration," says Jim. "Our in-house Data Manager tells me that she can generate reports and access files more quickly, allowing her to get more done each day."

In addition, it has extra in-built capacity of 4.5 TB and multiple spare slots that can be utilised when the need arises. This enables the school to scale up with minimal additional investment as and when required. Furthermore, it takes up a quarter of the rack space and has very little management and maintenance demands. And, in the event of any incidents, Cutter Group is on hand to provide first-line support.

"It's scalable and yet much smaller while requiring practically nothing in terms in of management resources. It simply sits in the rack getting on with the job – I haven't needed to look at it once since installation," comments Jim. "That makes my life easier and gives us confidence moving forward that we have a solid, cost-effective storage foundation on which to build."

With the new FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 in place, Hemsworth Academy is exploring other areas of the school where it can again partner with Cutter and Fujitsu.

"We are delighted with the Fujitsu storage solution so it makes sense to keep it in mind when new projects arise," concludes Jim. "We've been talking to Cutter Group about desktop virtualisation in the longer term in order to reduce costs and introduce flexibility. When we put thin clients on the desktop, we'll certainly look at what Fujitsu has to offer."

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