

Case Study

University Campus Suffolk

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John Herd, Network Manager, University Campus Suffolk



The Customer

UCS is a new kind of higher education institution that allows students to access the knowledge and resources of its two validating universities, the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex, as well as local colleges and the wider community. Teaching and research is underpinned by an academic infrastructure that includes many top Professors and Visiting Professors and UCS has achieved high rates of employability and increasingly strong National Student Survey outcomes. Since its foundation in 2007, student numbers have grown consistently to approximately 4,500 FTEs in 2011/12.

The Challenge

When UCS was founded in 2007, the initial challenge was to design an organisational architecture and a technical infrastructure that would cope with thousands of students and hundreds of staff, from day one. The scale of the challenge only became apparent when the original architects of UCS realised that there were few design precedents that they could fall back on.

“When it came to the technology that underpinned the university, the original technical design team used established ITIL and PRINCE2 methodologies to design, deliver and implement the network infrastructure. Whilst the UCS network design was a case study of how ITIL and PRINCE2 processes work, it didn’t prevent issues when it was handed over to production,” explains John Herd, Network Manager at UCS. *“I was hired to troubleshoot and fix significant performance and reliability problems after implementation, when the original design team were long gone.*

“Of all the problems that UCS’s infrastructure was suffering from, the most significant challenge was the SAN which had suffered two catastrophic failures before I arrived; UCS had asked the original vendor responsible to try to solve the issue, but despite their best efforts no solution was found. I felt that we needed a new approach to solve the problem,” says Herd.

“The essential challenge was to find a partner who had a reputation for solid engineering and could provide a well-engineered, reliable and scalable storage solution,” adds Herd. *“I needed a scalable SAN that didn’t require complex storage management to deliver those features, which could be put into production quickly, and that wouldn’t spring surprises in operation. The answer was Fujitsu.”*

THE CUSTOMER

Country: United Kingdom
 Industry: Education
 Founded: 2007
 Website: www.ucs.ac.uk



THE CHALLENGE

University Campus Suffolk (UCS) was faced with a SAN that was unreliable, causing disruption and failure across the network. It needed a new storage solution that would be stable, scalable and cost-effective.

THE SOLUTION

Fujitsu spent time with UCS discussing the concerns of the network team and the short, medium and long-term needs of the organisation. It proposed migrating to two Fujitsu ETERNUS DX80 storage systems, providing 100TBs of modular storage and backup.

THE BENEFITS

- The new SAN performs twice as well as the previous solution, thanks to its simplicity and intuitive management interface
- Its stability has reduced the amount of downtime and enabled the smooth operations of the network
- The SAN worked out 50 per cent less expensive than other proposed solutions from other vendors, enabling UCS to stretch its budget further
- As there are only two – rather than eight – types of hard drive, it is much easier to operate and allocate storage to specific tasks

The Solution

Working with UCS's very detailed analysis and requirements for a unified storage infrastructure, Fujitsu proposed an underwritten solution where the data from the existing, and unreliable, SAN would be migrated over to two Fujitsu ETERNUS DX80 storage systems over one weekend, providing 100TBs of modular storage and backup.

As part of the Fujitsu ETERNUS DX80 offer, Fujitsu also engaged in a knowledge transfer and training exercise to ensure that UCS technical staff were thoroughly familiarised with ETERNUS storage technology. This ensured that the organisation was left firmly in charge of its own destiny, once the migration of data was complete.

"Fujitsu not only demonstrated that the ETERNUS storage family is well engineered, scalable and affordable, but Fujitsu took the bold step of under-writing the risk that UCS was taking by switching to a completely new storage architecture and manufacturer. The risks of this project were significantly higher than a typical storage migration project; it's a sign of the confidence that Fujitsu had in their product that they were prepared to under-write the risks in such a positive manner," says Herd. "I'm pleased to say that the migration project was a complete success. We migrated and consolidated a significant amount of data, from 96 servers in our data centre onto two ETERNUS DX80 SANs, whilst keeping within agreed SLAs with system and business owners, and not incurring any unexpected downtime."

The Benefit

The new SAN solution has proven to be stable and scalable, delivering critical services to staff, and students, at UCS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without stop. An intuitive management interface makes the system easy for people to understand and maintain and, because there are only two – rather than eight – types of hard drive, it is much easier to operate and allocate storage to specific tasks.

"With two SANs, rather than one, we're able to balance service load more elegantly, and guarantee resiliency for staff and students, which is a positive step forward for the university. In addition the Fujitsu solution was significantly less expensive than other proposed solutions from other vendors and came with much lower total cost of ownership," comments Herd. "Fujitsu mirrored my own philosophy of keeping it simple and delivering the best fit for the university at the same time. Complex technical solutions always come at a price, be it in the implementation, staff skills or cost of maintenance."

Since working with Fujitsu on the SAN project, Herd and his team have been exploring other ways in which the two organisations can work together. One instance is in the radiography lab where workstations and medical-grade monitors were needed. Fujitsu has supplied inexpensive PCs along with top of the range monitors at a price few others could match.

"The radiography lab was another excellent example of how Fujitsu work with you to ensure that you get the right solution for your business, at a price you can afford," says Herd. "It's great to be able to tap into Fujitsu's extensive solutions portfolio, and call on their extensive technical experience, which magnifies our ability to deliver innovative solutions to organisational challenges."

As a direct result of the positive experiences that Fujitsu and UCS shared on the storage and radiography projects, both parties realised that their strategic aims and ambitions were very much in tune with one another. In the future both organisations hope to explore a longer term engagement, in order to deliver UCS's promises on the student experience, community engagement and forward thinking adoption of new technologies.

"Fujitsu understands our organisation and is more than happy to fit in with the other vendor solutions without turning it into a feature battle. The way in which we closely collaborate together makes it feel like a partnership and Fujitsu's focus on technology rather than sales is very refreshing. We are certain that it will be a critical partner for us as we continue to evolve."

About Fujitsu

Fujitsu is the leading Japanese information and communication technology (ICT) company offering a full range of technology products, solutions and services. Over 170,000 Fujitsu people support customers in more than 100 countries. We use our experience and the power of ICT to shape the future of society with our customers. Fujitsu Limited (TSE:6702) reported consolidated revenues of 4.5 trillion yen (US\$54 billion) for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2012. For more information, please see www.fujitsu.com

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