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BUILDING A PLATFORM FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Federation University Australia transforms IT efficiency and agility to accelerate digital innovation for 25,000 students across four campuses



Creating a difference in a competitive market

Education has always been a results-driven business. Especially as we navigate our way through a post-COVID landscape, competition for resources and status is fierce and is most evident in the university sector.

Students are more demanding and funders of research want to find the right home for their investment.

Universities require a significant investment in time and expense and students and researchers want to know they're getting value for money. With universities vying to acclaim their credentials—from student experience to alumni employment—there is now a wealth of data to help students make their critical decisions on where to study.

Focusing on the student experience

Federation University Australia is Australia's leading regional university. It provides innovative and integrated lifelong learning, job skills, and impactful research that enable people and communities to prosper locally, regionally, and globally.

Federation University prides itself on its reputation for providing learning experiences for its students that are practical, relevant, and enriching.

The Good Universities Guide 2021 places Federation at the top in several categories around the Victoria region, notably in graduate employment outcomes, graduate starting salaries, and in skills development. Federation is number one in Australia for post-graduate teaching quality and the latest quality indicators for learning and teaching places Federation as the second-highest performing university in Australia for postgraduate employment, and number nine in the country for undergraduate employment.



INDUSTRY: EDUCATION

REGION: AUSTRALIA

VISION

Generate efficiencies to allocate more resources to student experience

STRATEGY

Streamline management of servers, storage, and backup through hyperconverged infrastructure

OUTCOMES

- Expects to generate cost savings of AUD\$1 million over five years
- Simplifies IT operations and accommodates transformation of the university experience
- Enables remote, flexible learning through COVID-19 pandemic and into the future

Federation's research collaborations are world-class and above on 11 disciplines, with a focus on solving real-world problems and making a difference in people's lives. "The student experience is very important to us," says Jeremy Egan, Manager, Enterprise Data at Federation University Australia. "Digital transformation is fundamental; from the way lessons are accessed to the campus notifications to apps for booking resources. From an IT infrastructure perspective, it's vital we present ourselves as a modern teaching environment and that we are efficient," says Egan.

"Becoming a more efficient organization is one of our strategic objectives. We cannot divert time or resource away from the student experience," adds Egan.

Old approach was no longer fit for purpose

Federation was determined to get itself on a stronger IT footing. It wanted to accommodate new applications and new environments, and it wanted to do so quickly and efficiently. In a data-heavy world, it wanted to give itself the headroom to scale up.

The previous approach to IT infrastructure was no longer fit for purpose. "We had been working in a very traditional mindset of servers, storage, and backup. It was time to start looking at the bigger picture," says Egan. With hardware coming to end of life, and capacity needing to be addressed, there was an opportunity to rethink our approach.

"We recognized hyperconverged infrastructure was part of the future for us, and that would require a new way of looking at total cost of ownership. University funding models often lead to short-term funding decisions. We wanted to establish a clearer picture of cost over a period of years," points out Egan.

Improve application performance, free up storage, accelerate backup

With the support of HPE partner, NTT Ltd., HPE SimpliVity enabled Federation to establish a hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI), which improves application performance, frees up storage, and accelerates local and remote backup and restore functions. Full backups take only a few seconds to complete, much faster than traditional backups.

"A long-term HPE servers and storage customer, a conversation around HCI was natural," says Andrew Matheson, Manager, Service Operations, Information Technology Services at Federation University Australia. "The features and functionality alone, required Federation to conduct a proof of concept. We got some boxes in and had the team test it out. When we saw some of the figures, we thought it was too good to be true," Matheson explains.



“We first thought our calculations were wrong, but they weren’t. The figures indicated Federation University Australia could save AUD\$1 million over five years. This is funding that can be ploughed straight into service improvements for the university’s 25,000 students, for faculty, and across the university environment,” says Matheson.

More scalable, robust, and certain

The immediate impact is that Federation is more robust and more certain in its IT operations. With HPE SimpliVity’s inherent high-availability capabilities, the risk of downtime to the university’s finance and student management systems is eliminated. High-tech research can continue. The entire virtual infrastructure delivers peak and predictable performance and is supported, with the scale to accommodate future growth.

Federation offers over 400 subjects, and although many require face-to-face teaching, an increasing amount of coursework is digital. Federation

anticipates the future will involve more flexible learning and with many more remote learners. HCI with automation including HPE InfoSight, powered by predictive analytics, frees up time and resources to support new, digital projects.

“HPE InfoSight has helped us understand data growth,” says Egan. “Thanks to HPE InfoSight, we have been able to rebalance the load between data centers to optimized storage utilization. This allows us to prevent overprovisioning and underutilization of the platform.”

In terms of financials, the switch to HPE SimpliVity has revealed further new savings. The university has avoided the maintenance costs on old servers, saving AUD\$90,000.

“These are not insubstantial figures for us and we’re continuing to find more. We’re only two years into HCI and the benefits are greater than we imagined,” says Egan.

“These are the kind of eye-catching figures that impress management. They meet the strategic imperative of ‘efficiency gains’, and polish the credibility of the IT infrastructure team. The university will continue to develop as digital transformation continues, and we have the full confidence of management that we are the team that delivers successful projects. HPE SimpliVity protects data in ways we could not achieve before,” says Egan. “Trust can take a long time to build. Management trusts us.”



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