AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

IT Transformation

In Summary

Parallo enables ACU to reduce costs, reduce management load and progress their cloud strategy.

ACU's compute challenge

Australian Catholic University (ACU) provides education to students of all beliefs. Founded in 1991, the ACU provides courses to approximately 20,000 full-time students from campuses in Ballarat, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

To provide an IT environment for the students, faculty and administrative staff, ACU had to regularly acquire new servers to support growing numbers of applications and computing resources. By 2008 ACU had deployed 160 servers across its production and disaster recovery data centres.

The university was beginning to run out of data centre real estate and the collective heat generated by the servers was straining the facility's power and cooling systems.

The issue of IT sprawl

Along with data centre capacity issues, ACU's sprawling IT environment was causing a host of other problems. They were receiving poor return on their investment in IT hardware and were struggling with a slow disaster recovery process. Downtime was also an issue; taking four hours to power up servers, storage and associated infrastructure. This was an unacceptable length of time for critical systems and information to be unavailable.

Slow response to business

Despite its considerable investment in data centre equipment, ACU's IT team could not respond quickly enough to demands for additional capacity. With each new server taking three weeks to order and commission, progress was too slow to support important research projects.

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A virtualised environment

ACU needed an IT infrastructure that would improve its return on investment, provide the capability for fast provisioning of resources to researchers and other university staff, and ease the task of data centre hardware management. Along with this ACU wanted a platform that would enable them to adopt new IT service delivery models in the future, such as cloud-based solutions and services.

Parallo delivers major improvements

After reviewing the services of a range of vendors, ACU engaged with Parallo in January 2012. "One of Parallo's good selling points is their focus on virtualisation: they have a lot of specific, dedicated expertise in that area," said Paul Campbell, IT Director, Australian Catholic University. "In other words, they stick to what they do best." The managed service provides operational support for the ACU virtualisation and storage environment; identifying issues as they arise and alerting the university's IT team, if required. Parallo helps identify incidences when ACU has over-resourced individual virtual machines, allowing the university to allocate processor and memory capacity more effectively.

"VMware is the best-placed product for virtualisation today, and the additional management tools that they've added to the suite allow us to make our processes for establishing and running virtual machines more efficient," said Campbell. "The partnership with Parallo is helping make us more aware of opportunities to achieve further benefits in this area." From a broader perspective, the Parallo engagement has helped the university further explore ways to grow while managing its costs efficiently.

Results

- ☑ Delivered a capital saving of AU$450,000 by removing 100 leased physical servers from the IT environment
- ☑ Freed up ACU IT staff resource to focus on other areas, outside of managing the virtualised infrastructure
- ☑ Improved efficiency by identifying incidences where ACU had over-resourced individual virtual machines
- ☑ Reduced average server deployment time from three weeks to 30 minutes
- ☑ Reduced disaster recovery time from four hours to automatic failover within 30 minutes
- ☑ Allowed for rapid growth with only a very small increase in IT staff
- ☑ Cut electricity consumption by 28 kilowatts and reduced carbon footprint

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info@parallo.com | parallo.com

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