

Data#3 Customer Story

University of Tasmania

UTAS Scores Environmental and Management Wins with HPE GreenLake



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Project Highlight

The operational expenditure model makes it easy to grow storage capacity in moments, without time-consuming funding processes associated with large capital expenses.

Objective

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) sought to replace ageing infrastructure with an operational expenditure model that would meet virtual platform storage needs.

Benefits

- HPE GreenLake solution deployed to two data centres
- Increased storage requirements that can be provisioned in seconds
- Familiar technology which made the transition easy for the UTAS IT team
- Ongoing management support from HPE
- OPEX model that fits the UTAS IT strategy and avoids capital expenditure (CAPEX)
- Increased ability to respond to fluctuations in business needs
- Up-to-date technology reduces overall risk

Solutions & Services

- ✓ HPE GreenLake
- ✓ Nimble Storage Infrastructure
- ✓ Procurement

Approach

With end-of-life approaching for existing Nimble Storage infrastructure, the university issued a tender to source a new solution. Data#3's submission was the only response that proposed a pay-as-you-go model, fitting the UTAS requirements to transition to an operational expenditure (OPEX) model, and offered the best outcome.

Testimonial

“The icing on the cake of the HPE GreenLake solution is the easy monthly invoice, and no big capital expense. We have the ability to grow, and just pay a little more as we increase capacity when we need it.”

Iain Sheppard, Enterprise Services and Networks Manager, University of Tasmania.

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The Background

While the University of Tasmania (UTAS) is over 130 years old, its progressive approach has earned a position among the world’s leading research-led institutions. Work in diverse fields has led UTAS to breakthroughs ranging from technology to accurately detect traces of explosives, to advancements in providing oxygen to premature infants.

The university’s work, and its status as one of Tasmania’s largest employers, place heavy demands on the IT environment, and corporate data requirements are considerable. While the Nimble Storage in place had served the university well, it was reaching end-of-life, and the university’s IT team researched modern technology that would best serve its needs.

The Challenge

UTAS had invested in a Nimble Storage solution before the All-Flash and Hybrid-Flash specialist’s acquisition by HPE in 2017. The infrastructure had performed well and offered strong performance and manageability advantages compared to other options on the market at that time. In the years since, Enterprise Services and Networks Manager, Iain Sheppard, said that the needs of the university had increased.

“We were reaching the limits of what we could do with the storage environment we had, so we looked at what was out there on the market.”

The ageing equipment was primarily purposed for the UTAS corporate environment. Here, users perform the many roles that keep the university running smoothly, so that students and researchers can enjoy the best possible experience of university life.

Well-planned and managed technology plays a key role in supporting the university’s large workforce to perform at their best.

“In this corporate environment, we just need fast, reliable storage,” commented Iain Sheppard.

Managing an ageing infrastructure added some burden to their already busy IT team. Reducing management effort in the storage environment was seen as an opportunity for skilled staff to focus more attention on activities that would improve user experience.

Previously, any increase in capacity had involved lengthy planning, and applying for funding, and overallocation had occurred to prevent performance impact. This was at odds with the university’s IT strategy that prioritised pay-as-you-go over capital expenditure.

“Other tender responses came back with CAPEX options, but Data#3 came back with HPE GreenLake, which gave us the chance to get away from that three to five-year CAPEX cycle,” said Iain Sheppard.

Another consideration that has become increasingly important to the university in recent years is its environmental footprint. Sustainable practices are embedded in UTAS operations, with a commitment to reducing overall energy use and reducing wasted energy prioritised in IT decision-making.

“The university is working to reduce its environmental footprint as much as possible. Our state is now powered entirely by renewable energy, and the university has had a big push to play our part in responsible consumption,” recounted Iain Sheppard.

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IT Outcome

The university selected Data#3’s proposal of a HPE GreenLake consumption-based storage model, running on Nimble technology. It was, said Iain Sheppard, a “better solution than the others put forward”, offering a cloud-like experience throughout the hybrid on and off-premises environment. Data#3 provisioned the solution at the two UTAS data centres. The UTAS team, who were already familiar with Nimble technology from their previous storage environment, handled the required data migration.

“It was a very simple transition. We created a virtual environment so we could live migrate virtual machines across, and it was the same with all storage arrays. It is a lot easier to migrate data now than it used to be, we were effectively moving it from one storage array to another,” explained Iain Sheppard.

One of the biggest differences for Iain Sheppard’s team has been the reduction in effort needed to manage the storage environment and provision capacity. The university’s usage is monitored by HPE.

“Upgrades are easier under the GreenLake model, and Data#3 and HPE look after it for us. They tell us when they notice us running low on capacity and let us know we need to increase. Adding capacity is something we can do in moments, just a few clicks,” commented Iain Sheppard.

“It just works, and we don’t have to worry about downtime.”

The ease of use that first drew the UTAS team to Nimble was still apparent, and Iain Sheppard said that the days of endlessly wrestling with complex storage environments were largely over.

“We have purchased Nimble technology for more than six years, and since they acquired the technology, HPE has always been helpful when we need them. In reality, though, Nimble is a pretty easy platform and it just works.”

Through his career, Iain Sheppard has seen a progression from physically large storage devices with lower capacity to the virtual machines the university uses today. Given the increasing amounts of data that are generated and stored by modern apps, he is happy with developments in storage technology.

“If we had to run all those machines – about 1,100 – it would be very expensive and hard to manage. However, with this solution it is pretty easy to manage 1,100 virtual machines. With the latest change, we are running the same operating system on different hardware, and it has really improved performance, and takes up less physical space, so it saves on power.”

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Business Outcome

The scalability of the HPE GreenLake solution has been a winning factor for UTAS, with the IT team able to respond rapidly to changing conditions. Where once, increasing storage capacity could take considerable time and planning, it is something that can now be accomplished with minimal effort. The sought-after skills of the IT team can be used where they can have the greatest effect. Importantly, the university no longer has to plan around major CAPEX when storage needs updating.

“Previously, we had to plan for a large capital expense every three years. If we needed to grow, we had to buy more infrastructure. With HPE GreenLake, it is all monitored by Data#3 and HPE, they let us know if we are running low on space. We have buffer room, and they can give us more storage as needed, without impacting our business,” said Iain Sheppard.

“We also have catch-ups once a month to keep an eye on storage plans.”

When the university researched the various options on the market, careful attention was paid to the overall cost of each option. It is, according to Iain Sheppard, well worth paying attention to the finer details.

“We looked at other options, and a number had a really good technology component, but when we factored in the price, Nimble was the obvious choice. Others charge you a rate for data written, the solution we chose charges for data written after compression, which makes a noticeable cost difference.”

The new storage environment was introduced with a minimum of fuss, and users were none the wiser. Iain Sheppard said that this process was helped by the “strong communication” of the Data#3 account manager.

“If she didn’t know an answer immediately, she would find the right person. It was really a very simple process, there was never a situation where I had to chase for answers.”

The biggest improvement is the simplicity of having access to the right storage amount for a monthly bill, and the option to adjust immediately.

“The icing on the cake of the HPE GreenLake solution is the easy monthly invoice, and no big capital expense. We have the ability to grow, and just pay a little more as we increase capacity when we need it. We might provision 200 Terabytes, but if we only use 100 Terabytes, we just pay for that. There is no waiting for it to arrive, and no capacity planning. As we navigated the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, having a solution that could adapt and change readily made all the difference. HPE GreenLake quickly proved itself as the silver lining to our COVID cloud,” described Iain Sheppard.

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Iain Sheppard, Enterprise Services and Networks Manager, University of Tasmania.

Conclusion

The IT team at UTAS is dedicated to offering the best possible experience for staff, students, and the entire university community. Their contribution is essential as the highly regarded university showcases its excellence and innovation to the world. By freeing their time from the administrative burden of managing and provisioning traditional storage, the team can use their expertise to tackle other tasks. Achieving this progress was helped, said Iain Sheppard, by a strong relationship with Data#3 and HPE as the storage environment was modernised.

“Data#3’s strength is that they have been a great partner, their communication was stellar, their tender application was spot-on. They have the skills in-house to answer any complex technical questions, and overall, from start to finish, their ongoing support has been really good,” commented Iain Sheppard.

With a lengthy partnership spanning many projects, Iain Sheppard said that the Data#3 team was quick to use their knowledge of the university to identify the right fit. This included hitting the mark not only from a technical perspective, but also meeting sustainability targets, and incorporating the university’s strategy of moving where possible to an OPEX model.

“Really, the success was in the way the tender was presented, the way the solution was delivered, and the communication of our Data#3 account manager, who would take my call any time of day and always get back to me. And the solution just worked, it was simple. There was no stress, it was a pleasure,” concluded Iain Sheppard.

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Data#3 and HPE

With over two decades of partnership experience, Data#3 is one of HPE's largest Platinum Partners in Asia Pacific. We have worked together on a broad range of projects for leading Australian organisations across education, government and the corporate sector. Leveraging HPE's broad range of solutions and services, as well as its renowned Aruba technology, we help our customers to accelerate their digital transformation and unlock true business value.

HPE delivers 'Everything as a Service' (EaaS) with its pay-per-use HPE GreenLake platform. Production ready cloud services are managed for you by HPE and Data#3 which means you can free up resources, time and budget, to focus on what matters to your organisation.

Data#3


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