Incremental VDI Solution for Jones College

A Common Problem

Jones College is located in Ellisville, Mississippi, just northeast of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Jones College has one main location with many buildings on one site.

Jones College contended with a common IT problem of maintaining desktop computers for faculty and students. The continual stress of replacing and maintaining desktop computers put a strain on the Technology Department. Additionally, maintaining consistency in hardware was difficult with frequently changing desktop models, drivers, and software packages. "What used to take an army to maintain can now be managed by one person. Gone are the days of getting together a band of technicians to go and fix a massive lab," states Aaron Huff – Jones College VDI Administrator.

Background

Jones College had been desiring and exploring a VDI solution for a number of years. Initially Jones College began with a low traffic lab to begin a pilot program. This pilot program provided the staff time to familiarize themselves with VMware HorizonView software. After the complete success of this initial phase, Jones College expanded their VDI footprint by overhauling the library/periodical lab, their heaviest traffic lab. With both of these labs showing complete success, the Technology Department has begun replacing other desktop labs with VDI terminals. "The best part about finishing this lab is that the days following the reopening [of the labs], students were able to come in, sit down, and start working as if nothing was changed but the outward appearance of new computers that worked faster. That alone created a great sense of pride and confidence in our department that we had made the right choice," states Jonathan Houston – Technology Project Manager for Jones College.

HVE was introduced to Jones College as a cost-effective, next generation, solution-provider for virtualization. After a number of design calls, HVE worked with Jones College to design a solution to begin their pilot program. This solution developed by HVE and Jones College mapped out a course to ensure VDI success all the while looking for future expansion and budgetary concerns. Due to the continual support and training provided by HVE, Jones College was able to setup the library/periodical lab by themselves. "After the library lab, which is the heaviest traffic lab, proved to be a rousing success, both financially and functionally, we have recommended VDI clients for nearly every lab scenario on campus. While the trend seems to be to have less and less physical IT staff, we needed a way to provide the resources that teachers and students require, without stretching ourselves so thin that we are unable to provide adequate support." states Huff.

Profile

Location: Ellisville, MS

Students: 4,500

Staff: 300

Overview

Number of Virtual Desktops: 600

Hardware:

(1) 202-N 2U Server

(1) STACK 2U chassis with (2) 201bn server blades designed for VDI workloads

(1) BIX-MINI-6 server for VMware control servers

Zero-clients: 180 Zero Clients

The HVE Solution

In order to address the individual needs of Jones College, HVE engineered a solution that provided an environment that would allow time for the training of the staff before putting VDI into the mainstream. Phase 1 consisted of an HVE-202-N VDI appliance. This 2u rack space appliance can run over 200 standard desktops. In the initial phase, all of the VMware HorizonView control servers were loaded on the HVE-202-N along with the VDI desktops. While this was not the standard method for a VDI environment, this slight adjustment ensured that any issues that may arise on VDI will not affect their VMware data center.

After the success of phase one, Jones College purchased an HVE-STAGE-BIX-MINI-6, which is a 1U rack space server virtualization appliance with 6 terabyte of local solid-state storage. The VMware HorizonView control servers were moved onto the HVE-STAGE-BIX-MINI-6 freeing up more space on the HVE-202-N and allowing for more virtual desktops.

Over the span of two years, Jones College continued to expand their VDI presence. After saturating the HVE-202-N appliance, they purchased an HVE-STACK appliance. This chassis-based appliance can hold up to (4) VDI modules each module able to run over 200 virtual desktops. To date, Jones College has populated their HVE-STACK appliance with (2) 201-bn modules. Overall, Jones College has implemented a VDI environment to run over 600 combined VDI desktops all within a 6U rackspace.

Outcomes

What has been the result of VDI being implemented at Jones College? "VDI clients have revolutionized the way we manage our labs," states Huff. Jones College provides an excellent example to show how careful implementation, good design, along with a strong partnership with HVE provides a solution that is truly beneficial.

When asked why HVE was chosen over other competitors, Jones College states without reservation that it is customer service and support. Aaron Huff states, "Our questions and concerns were always dealt with quickly and clearly. The product worked well right out of the box, and any time we had any growing pains, HVE support was there to help us learn the nuances of the system. HVE has been an invaluable ally in our quest to adapt to the ever changing world of IT."

"HVE products seem to be a step ahead as far as I've seen. I cannot say enough good things about their support, ease of use, and scalability…. As we began to see things moving forward, we were more confident that we found the right company going forward," states Houston.

About HVE ConneXions

HVE's engineering philosophy is to create Manageable, Scalable, and Reproducible and Predictable (MSRP) solutions. We base our solutions on proven virtualization technologies running on high-performance, next generation hardware. The result is an overall cost-effective and high-performance environment that scales to customers' needs.

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–Aaron Huff,

Virtual Desktop Administrator, Jones College

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Network Administrator, Jones College

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