Customer
Case Study

Victoria University Digitally Transformed to Widen Students' Flexible Learning Opportunities

With more than 100 years of history, Victoria University is one of six Australian institutions to offer courses in both Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and University education. It is the first university in Australia to offer the VU Block Model, which offers students more flexibility over their time and learning.

Industry

Education

VMware footprint

- VMware Horizon®
- VMware Horizon Service Universal Broker™

In 2022, Victoria University (VU) consolidated several of its campuses into a 29-story building in downtown Melbourne. The university introduced the VU Block Model of education, which favors smaller group classes. But VU did not have enough appropriate spaces to support this style of learning. PC labs, where students could gain access to specialized licensed software, were also highly limited by space. VMware Horizon, with cloud-hosted management services like the Universal Broker service, has enabled VU to provide flexible and secure access to these vital applications. VU expects to remove most of its PC labs by 2024, with students working on their own devices on the Horizon platform instead.

A trusted Australian educational institution

VU is more than a century old and is one of six Australian institutions to offer courses in both Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and university education systems. In 2018, the university introduced the VU Block Model, where students focus on one subject at a time and complete each study unit over four weeks. This teaching and learning approach has resulted in higher pass rates and better average grades. VU hopes its technological improvements will give students the tools to achieve their goals and create positive outcomes for the community.

> "From a licensing perspective we used to have about five or six PCs in different libraries: that would have the majority of the applications but you can only have five people on those PCs. Now students can use their laptops to leverage our Horizon Universal Subscription to access virtual workspace."
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> Manuel Bervanakis, Infrastructure Services Manager, Victoria University

VU dependence on PC labs hindered flexible learning

The university's dependence on PC labs hindered the VU Block Model learning style, which was designed for flexibility. It also restricted the faculty from using designated computers for lessons and curbed the potential for hybrid lesson formats.

"In the past, there were occasions when the software was only available on certain campuses. If a student needed to do homework, they actually had to drive to a site to find a computer laboratory and use it, assuming the lab wasn't used by anyone else. And there were constraints around the time of the day that they could go there. The beauty of using VMware Horizon now is that students can use the apps anytime and anywhere," says Manuel Bervanakis, the infrastructure services manager at Victoria University.

The VU Block Model meant that more interactive teaching and learning venues were needed in the new city campus to facilitate collaboration and discussion. The low student-to-teacher ratio also meant that more tutorial venues were required on campus. To create more space, VU made the key decision to remove its PC labs. As a result, faculty members needed to gain access to licensed applications from their laptops. Students also required a new way to access applications that were central to their coursework.

As VU was beginning to draw more students from outside Melbourne and overseas, the university had to ensure better remote access to specialized licensed software, which is critical to the continuity of their education model.

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Managing thousands of devices through a single platform

VU had to accelerate the implementation of VMware Horizon due to the pandemic and the migration of its city campuses into a single location. The new system was ready to go live within a month. In addition, VMware VDI solutions were easy enough for the university staff to use immediately, even if they had no expertise in the technology.

"We update one application from the Horizon Control Plane, and it's updated for hundreds of students straight away. It's more secure and easier to roll out and manage. We're deploying less, with more time allocated to ensure that the application is set up correctly and tested. The proper security parameters are also in place," says Bervanakis.

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With the virtualization of most important applications, designated PC labs are no longer needed to access specialized software. Virtual desktops allow faculty members to run the required licensed applications concurrently on most laptops or tablets, eliminating the need for more expensive hardware. Students and educators can now access their digital resources without being restricted by time or location.

About 3,000 students come through the new city tower every day, and they're all bringing their laptops, logging on to these different services that we have in a virtualized environment now. This is great to see," explains Stephen Peatling, manager of IT customer engagement at Victoria University.

Creating financially and geographically inclusive learning opportunities

With cloud-hosted Horizon Control Plane Services like Universal Broker, Image Management, Cloud Monitoring and App Volumes, there was reduced pressure for VU to use PC labs. Since students and teachers were no longer restricted to the designated hardware, more space could be created to accommodate students on campus. VU was also able to reduce the number of resources and administrator time required to support teachers and students. Plus, Horizon features like Universal Broker simplified management and access to virtual desktops and applications located across the two VU data centers.

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VMware Horizon desktop and app virtualization has resulted in VU delivering better services to students who have returned to campus for in-person classes. VMware technology has helped VU with its business ambition of offering modern learning to students across its different teaching pathways and opening its new vertical city campus which is limited by space. It has also enhanced the delivery of the VU Block Model. This has benefited all VU students, particularly students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Often, these students fall behind their peers, but their retention rates have increased since VU started to teach one study unit at a time via the VU Block Model approach. Virtual desktops have also helped the university administer a larger number of classes according to various learning preferences. Moreover, students are now able to easily access the required software for more advanced and specialized modules from anywhere at their own convenience.

The flexibility of VMware Horizon has further promoted remote learning, making education more accessible to thousands of students across Australia who no longer need to travel to campus to use specialized software. The easy accessibility of the apps has likewise boosted financial inclusion as students can now access them using simple, low-cost laptops or tablets (which are provided to students by the university in some cases) instead of the expensive hardware that made PC labs necessary.

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Partnering with VMware to spur automation, resilience, growth

VU aims to continue rolling out VMware Horizon across the university by 2023. It expects to shut down PC labs within the next two years, with most of its students working via the Horizon platform. VU is also considering adopting other automation capabilities such as VMware NSX® for software-defined networking. VU is working very closely with VMware and is constantly assessing the possible solutions they can adopt.