

Curtin University Enhances Learning and Improves Staff Productivity with Cloud Computing

Curtin University

industry:

Education

country:

Australia

business challenge:

Provide staff with fast and easy online access to a larger email mailbox, better archiving, improved security and high-availability options, while enabling users to access their email from any location at any time.

solution:

A cloud computing solution based on Microsoft Office 365.

services:

Design and implementation of the new environment.

results:

- Improved productivity and enhanced learning by enabling staff to gain access to university services from any location with an Internet connection
- Provided a hosted environment with failover capabilities that ensured the university's data could be recovered if there was a disaster
- Provided larger mailboxes for all university staff, improved email archiving and security, and compatibility with the latest email clients

Executive Summary

Dimension Data helped Curtin University move its email and Microsoft Office applications to a **cloud computing model**, enhancing student learning, **improving staff productivity** and **reducing IT infrastructure costs**.

Client Overview

Curtin University was established in 1966 as the Western Australian Institute of Technology. Named after former Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, the university has four faculties: the Centre for Aboriginal Studies; Curtin Business School; Health Sciences; Humanities; and Science and Engineering.

Students and teaching and administration staff are spread across six campuses in Western Australia.

Business Challenge

Email forms an essential part of the education process at Curtin University. Students use it to communicate with their peers and submit their assignments, while teachers and administration staff use it to distribute information to students across the university's campuses.

By late 2009, the university realised its existing email system was not serving these needs well. Students found the Linux-based email system was difficult to use and the 40MB allowance per user was not enough to store their files and messages.

However, upgrading the system and increasing storage for tens of thousands of email accounts would have required expensive hardware. In addition, keeping this infrastructure on site at the university

presented a significant business risk.

"Keeping all our IT assets on site could cause a problem if we experienced an environmental disaster that prevented us from gaining physical access to our data centre," said Peter Nikolettatos, Chief Information Officer, Curtin University.

To address these issues, Curtin University engaged Dimension Data to deploy Microsoft Live@edu, a cloud service that enables students and teaching staff to access email, file sharing, storage and messaging services over the web.

Following the success of this implementation for the students, the university's IT department wanted to expand its use of cloud services by enabling staff to access productivity applications online, starting with email.

This email system – based on Microsoft Exchange 2003 – provided an average of 180MB of storage to each staff member due to storage constraints, and the largest mailbox was 5GB. The university needed a system that would provide larger mailboxes and more functionality to keep pace with other application integration requirements.

"We wanted to give staff and students access to the software they used each day, at any time and from any location," said Nikolettatos.

"We also recognised that teaching staff spent a lot of time using a web browser so it made sense to give them online access to applications that would improve the way they communicated."

Solution Delivered

In early 2011, Curtin University engaged Dimension Data to help it trial Microsoft Office 365.

“Dimension Data’s specialists helped us design and test every use case and identify **exactly what we needed** to do to migrate our email services to the cloud.”

Peter Nikolettatos, Chief Information Officer, Curtin University

This cloud service primarily provides access to Microsoft Exchange Online email and popular Microsoft Office applications such as Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint – all through a web browser.

The university is now using Microsoft Office 365 to deliver cloud-based email access – from any PC or mobile device running Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Entourage, Microsoft ActiveSync or a web browser – to about 300 staff mailboxes, with a view to migrating the service to all 11,000 staff mailboxes by 2012.

This enables staff members to work and collaborate anywhere there is an internet connection. In the future, the university plans to provide staff with access to the full Microsoft Office 365 suite of productivity applications.

Some staff at Curtin University also use Microsoft Lync 2010, an integrated instant messaging, presence, telephony and videoconferencing application, to communicate with staff across all campuses. This application was also deployed by Dimension Data.

Voicemails belonging to a small number of staff using Microsoft Lync 2010 are stored in the Microsoft Exchange Online service, and can be retrieved from any device running the email client.

“Moving our applications into the cloud reduced costs and took the pressure off our IT staff by eliminating the need to deploy and manage multiple applications for students and teachers,” said Nikolettatos. “It also increased our storage capacity without having to invest in new hardware.”

Relationship History

Dimension Data had previously worked with Curtin University to deploy Microsoft Live@edu, Microsoft Enterprise Search, a Citrix software upgrade and Microsoft Forefront Identity Manager 2010. These projects gave the university confidence that Dimension Data’s technical staff could successfully deploy the new cloud applications.

How We Delivered

Dimension Data engineers first worked with Curtin University’s IT staff to design and implement the Microsoft Office 365 environment and facilitate a smooth migration.

Engineers guided the university’s transition from a Microsoft Exchange 2003 on-premise model to a Microsoft Office 365 cloud service. They provided a positive end-user experience before, during and after the migration.

“Dimension Data effectively helped move our data into the cloud while minimising the disruption to students and teaching staff,” said Nikolettatos.

“Dimension Data’s technical staff worked with our IT team and specialists from Microsoft, to gather the information they needed to develop a roadmap for both migrations.

“Dimension Data’s specialists helped us design and test every use case and identify exactly what we needed to do to migrate our services to the cloud.”

According to Nikolettatos, although Curtin University employs a team of 200 IT professionals, it would have taken an extra

12 months to complete the migration without Dimension Data’s assistance.

“We would have been relying on our peers in the university sector to share what they have learnt, which is not ideal because we want to be an innovator and a thought leader,” said Nikolettatos.

Value Derived

Moving email services to Microsoft Office 365 Exchange Online has improved staff productivity because they can access larger mailboxes and old emails from the online mailbox. The service also provides staff with improved email archiving and failover capabilities; full compatibility with the latest email clients; and secure online access to email and calendaring services from any location at any time.

“Cloud computing changes the university’s risk profile because the data is not stored on campus,” said Nikolettatos. “It gives us peace of mind that our data is secure and can be easily recovered from a backup facility.”

The university also plans to integrate Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Live@edu with its existing student management system – which students use to register for courses and view their exam results – and a learning application.