



Media Design School Poised for Growth with IBM®

Overview

Problem

After more than a decade of growth, Media Design School, a leading producer of specialist digital artists and design professionals, was outgrowing its IT environment. Its backend technology was becoming increasingly stretched due to the increased sophistication of design applications and the file sizes of student reels that included visually rich animation and visual effects movies and complex computer games requiring massive rendering power.

Solution

Working with Lexel Systems, Media Design School installed an IBM BladeCenter® S Chassis with two HS22 blades. These run as VMware ESX Hosts servicing 10 to 15 virtual servers. The School also has full populated Internal Storage (DS3300) with two trays providing 18TB of Tier 1 and Tier 2 storage. To ensure no-risk backups, the School selected IBM Tape Library running with Symantec Backup Exec, which offers Disk to Tape backup.

Benefits

On completion of the upgrade Media Design School now has an environment that is infinitely more stable, more efficient and scalable to meet future student and staff needs. Overheads are considerably reduced and increased storage ability ensures it is well poised to continue on its rapid growth path. The IT team now spends its days focused on taking the business forward with new technologies and options.

About Media Design School

Media Design School in downtown Auckland, New Zealand, has forged an enviable international reputation for producing outstanding professionals for the creative industries. People come from all over the globe to attend Media Design School courses, and the student population is a highly creative community of artists, developers, digital gurus and creatives from around the world.

Teaching industry-standard skills and knowledge, Media Design School offers highly relevant, industry integrated and production-orientated qualifications at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Locking in a new IT backbone

When your reputation for producing industry-ready graduates and post graduates for a wide range of creative industries is virtually unparalleled and your student numbers have been growing year on year for over a decade, reliability of technology is the backbone of your business.

However, as the school's IT infrastructure was increasingly pushed to capacity to keep up with business growth, Auckland's Media Design School was faced with the need to ensure their IT infrastructure was 'future-proofed' and capable of scaling to meet the demands of their facility.

Marty Yates, Media Design School's Technical and Operations Manager, explains the extent of the challenge: "To be honest, the backend IT had reached the point where it made more sense to replace the system completely rather than add to the system we had. We factored in the growing student and staff numbers, their technology demands, and the fluctuations of these over the academic year and the upgrade to the IBM solution became a logical way to move forward."

Yates says that when he and his team put the case to the School for a technology upgrade, the green light was practically already on – a rare experience for anyone in IT.

Yates knew that the upgrade was critical, as in addition to business growth, the School has to cater to the extremely large and ever-increasing pipeline capacity required for high-end production work produced to exacting industry standards.





IBM and Lexel solution provides stability and proofs for future success

Yates and his team put the project out to tender and after evaluating each option they selected Lexel Systems (formerly Computer Brokers) and their IBM solution. “Lexel was technically very thorough and were a pleasure to partner with and my previous experience with IBM gave me great confidence that this solution was the one for us and our future plans”, said Yates.

Yates explains that not being the biggest project in town, with an environment servicing around 350 desk-tops of varying specs and the associated back end requirements, a number of technology partners deemed this unworthy of response. Others were put off by the need to work over the two week Christmas shut down period.

“For Lexel, none of this posed an issue and that is the essence of a true partner.”

The team at Media Design School spent nine months working on this upgrade, prior to migration, primarily as this was being fitted in around an already busy daily workload, and the longer lead time paid off.

“Come migration, we were fairly confident that everything would be smooth sailing, bar perhaps the migration from our old Mac xServe to the new Mac Mini Server. And in fact, we had no real issues to speak of in any area. Our faith in selecting IBM and the new BladeCenter S Chassis with two HS22 blades, running as VMware ESX Hosts servicing between 10 and 15 virtual servers was well and truly justified from day one.”

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— Marty Yates, Media Design School's Technical and Operations Manager



Illustration by Jerome Mordido, Media Design School graduate

From cranking along to flying high

Ask Yates to share the benefits of the project, and the examples tumble forth.

“Where do I start – the space, the lack of wires, the speed of file transfer, the flexibility that VMware offers when it comes to setting up clones and testing, the ease at which the system can scale up (or down), the overall visibility that the IBM management tools provide – in short, life is a lot smoother from an IT perspective.”

But the benefits do not stop at the server room door. The School is experiencing a reduction in the air conditioning required to keep the area cool, and from a technical standpoint, growth can continue at pace with a backend capacity potential of one and a half times the current 450 students.

Media Design School Founder and CEO Liz Valintine sums up what the IBM solution has done for the School: “The creative industries today are based on advanced technologies that constantly break barriers into new possibilities and utilise the power of these new technologies as they emerge. We are a 24/7 business with considerable variance in demand on our technical infrastructure and support in relation to projects, student numbers and vacation periods at any one point in time. The need for a responsive and comprehensive technical support system is fundamental to us being able to deliver highly specialised capability required by industry. It is only fitting that our School is supported by leading edge technology that can scale, evolve and grow alongside our business strategy.”



Illustration by Kamran Azim, Media Design School graduate

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For more information

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