Case Study Summary

The Challenge
Building on its wider infrastructure services work with Logicalis to meet the long-term capacity and capability demands of the University's growth in research, a VDI initiative was identified as an opportunity to deliver further maintenance and operational savings within the IT team.

The Solution
Utilising Logicalis' influence with its vendor partnerships, Loughborough secured VDI licences from VMware to support up to 400 seats. Deployment was straightforward and within just a few months, and following Logicalis' consultation, VDI access ran throughout the University's academic and research staff, as part of a BYOD initiative.

Key Benefits
Quickly realised the benefits expected; total cost of ownership and efficiency within the IT team, modest carbon savings, and the provision of an alternative IT service for corporate users. Unexpected benefits delivered real RoI; VDI access to the University's administrative apps from personal mobile devices is now enabling academics to log expenses, access shared teaching resources with students.

VDI slashes IT costs; connects roaming academics with business tools

Loughborough University is one of the country's leading universities, with a reputation for excellence in teaching and research, strong links with business and industry and unrivalled sporting achievement. Loughborough is the UK's premier university for sport and has perhaps the best, integrated sports development environment in the world.

The Challenge
In 2010, Loughborough University undertook a major refresh of its network, data centre, and voice strategy and infrastructure. The overriding objective was to cost-effectively meet the long-term capacity and capability demands of its growing research, teaching and enterprise services.

Central to the refresh was the implementation of Logicalis' Cooperative Cloud, a hybrid cloud service that immediately provided the flexibility, capacity and efficiency the University needed – from an IT, finance and resource perspective.

In the early stages of procurement, Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) was mooted as an additional initiative that would support the University's objectives and deliver further maintenance and operational savings within the IT team.

Dr Phil Richards, Director of IT at Loughborough University, comments, “We saw real merit in VDI – particularly since the data centre refresh would give us the capability to easily support VDI. However, at the time, in terms of the bigger picture, it was less of a priority.”
The Solution

As with all procurement processes, negotiating the most commercially competitive deal is a given. Richards adds, “Late in the procurement process, and utilising Logicalis’ influence with its vendor partnerships, we were able to secure three VDI licences from VMware. The licences would support up to 400 seats.”

Whilst the licences were secured in 2010, the bigger picture strategy meant that VDI was only implemented in late 2012. At this stage, although many of Richards’ peers were already using VDI, he was cautious of its true potential and ROI to the University and initially restricted its rollout to corporate users.

“We chose to deploy VDI to our corporate users – those that operate the business of university life, for instance our finance and HR departments. Simply put, it was easier for us to determine the requirements of this group, and generally their needs tended to be less technically demanding.”

Within just a few months, and following Logicalis’ consultation, Richards was providing VDI access to the University’s academic and research staff, as part of a BYOD initiative.

Key Benefits

Richards comments, “We very quickly realised the benefits we had expected to see, namely; total cost of ownership and efficiency within the IT team, modest carbon savings, and the provision of an alternative IT service for corporate users. Deployment was straightforward, and staff able to securely access our existing library of virtual apps such as Sage and Autocad, immediately. Staff also found it easy to use, which meant less training and fewer helpdesk demands.”

In terms of IT team efficiency, Richards points to a significant saving in maintenance: “Despite it being a small deployment, we’re saving the equivalent, in man-hours, of 1-2 IT staff. This frees my team to focus on more productive duties.”

For Richards though, it was the unexpected benefits that have helped VDI deliver the most significant ROI to the University:

“VDI has proven useful for supporting corporate apps that haven’t been written for mobile devices yet. However, where it’s really making a difference is with our academic department. As a world class University, our lecturing and research teams often contribute to conferences and working groups around the world. Providing VDI access to the University’s administrative apps from their personal mobile devices is enabling them to log expenses, access shared teaching resources with students, and so on. With respect, this is invaluable to maintaining the University’s reputation as a leading education establishment. As always, utilising Logicalis’ influence and consultancy is enabling the University to exploit IT initiatives that have a big business impact.”

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Dr Phil Richards, Director of IT at Loughborough

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