Running IT better with HP

New Orleans' A.B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University delivers maximum uptime for users with reliable HP hardware

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—Tom Gerace, Director of Information Technology, Freeman School of Business, Tulane University

HP customer case study: Adaptive Infrastructure

Industry: education

About the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University

Founded in 1914, New Orleans' A.B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University has grown to become a leading, internationally recognized business school with more than 1,800 students in programs spanning three continents.

Objective

Maximize efficiency and systems availability by standardizing on one hardware vendor with high-quality products and a consistent set of management tools

Approach

Implement an Adaptive Infrastructure from HP—including servers, storage, client systems, and networking hardware—with the added flexibility of HP's Self-Maintainer program

Business outcomes

- Rugged, reliable servers offer maximum availability.
- Tablet PCs promote classroom creativity.

IT improvements

- 90 percent fewer visits to the data center
- Twofold faster server deployment
- Threefold faster break-fix with HP Self-Maintainer program

Building an Adaptive Infrastructure

The only nationally ranked business school in the Gulf South, the Freeman School of Business at Tulane University is consistently listed among the nation's best business schools by leading publications. Individually, its Finance department has been ranked among the top 10 in the world by the *Financial Times*.

While the Freeman School shares some IT resources such as email with the larger university, it maintains its own IT group and network. Since the late 1990s, the Freeman School has been able to adapt to rapidly changing IT requirements using Adaptive Infrastructure solutions from HP.

"Having an integrated set of solutions from a single vendor has helped us evolve and adapt our data center over the years," says Tom Gerace, the school's director of information technology. "Standardizing on HP ProLiant servers and management tools just has been extremely beneficial for us—it has helped us be more efficient in the data center."

90 percent fewer trips to the data center

Before standardizing on HP servers, Gerace's staff had to make at least two unscheduled visits to the data center each month to reboot servers and resolve issues. "We also had planned downtime every week in our former environment, which we've since moved to Microsoft® Windows®," he says. "Granted, operating systems are more stable now than they were back then, but from time to time, things still happen. Using HP Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO2) and HP Onboard Administrator, we can do a lot of heavy management from home instead of driving to the data center in the middle of the night. And our staff members love the fact that they can do routine

administration tasks, such as making configuration changes, from a remote location."

To manage its HP ProLiant DL580 and DL360 G5 Servers, the Freeman School uses HP Systems Insight Manager. Gerace appreciates the consistency that HP has maintained in its management interface over the years. "We're able to provide a high level of systems uptime and meet the needs of our users due to the reliability of the HP products and its remote management solutions," he notes.

Twofold faster server deployment

"Obviously there have been changes and improvements in Systems Insight Manager, but all our engineers are very comfortable with it," Gerace continues. "That consistency and comfort level save us training time and allow us to deploy servers twice as fast—we don't have to spend half the morning figuring out how to use some other vendor's management product."

With its campus split between New Orleans and Houston, the school relies on a virtual private network (VPN) to ensure a seamless campus environment. A greater push toward virtualization, Gerace notes, will further help the school support and scale the services it can offer to the remote campus locations.

The school is also using an HP StorageWorks Modular Smart Array (MSA) and an HP StorageWorks tape library on the back end.

New approaches to learning

The school's HP ProLiant servers power a host of specialized research and statistical applications that require high compute power. One that gives the school a significant competitive edge is its trading room—a realistic simulation of a corporate trading floor—to teach students about commodities trading and foreign exchange. "It has live feeds to the world, whether it's the commodities markets or European exchanges, so if you had a trading license you could actually trade real dollars," says Gerace. "We don't trade real dollars, of course, but it gives students tremendous hand-on experience."

Instructors at the Freeman School often use HP Compaq tc4200 Tablet PCs, connecting through a network using HP ProCurve wireless access points, to display data on classroom projectors. This provides for a more interactive classroom experience.
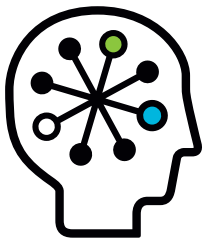
"It's really interesting to watch them teach," says Gerace. "They can walk around the room, circle things on the tablet screen using the pen-based input device, and have it show up on the projector screen. They're no longer stuck behind the lectern. It's just a wonderful machine in the classroom, and our instructors are really good at exploiting the technology."

No unplanned downtime, no complaints

The Freeman School participates in the HP Self-Maintainer program, certifying its staff technicians on HP hardware to enable faster break-fix. "The HP Self-Maintainer program allows my staff to do warranty work on our HP equipment and essentially act like a warranty repair shop," says Gerace. "I can buy warranty parts and they are here tomorrow. This is very important to us, and it was one of the reasons the school decided to standardize on HP."

If a researcher's HP Compaq 2510p Notebook PC needs attention, for example, very little downtime is required. "We'll have them back up and running the next day because we can do the maintenance in house," says Gerace. "If we had to send it out for service, it would take at least three days."

After its decade-long relationship with HP, the Freeman School has found an enduring partnership. "We will continue to purchase only HP hardware because of the many efficiencies the school has realized over the past decade," says Gerace. "I never hear any complaints about HP's hardware performance. We just don't have unplanned downtime."

Technology for better business outcomes

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