



UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Winchester University enjoys a decade of reliable load balancing

Initially implemented to resolve a pressing incompatibility issue, Loadbalancer.org solutions have since been in use at the University of Winchester for over a decade. The virtual appliances ensure the high availability of the university's critical student records system and have proved to be reliable, affordable and easy to use.

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In ten years of use, the Loadbalancer.org solutions have been extremely reliable. We keep putting more and more traffic through our load balancers and they are still performing brilliantly.

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Challenges

- Resolve VMware compatibility issues
- Improve performance of web-based apps

Solution

- Loadbalancer.org Enterprise VA

Benefits

- Simple deployment with VMware vSphere
- Consistently reliable performance
- Easy to set up, manage and maintain
- Scalable enough to support years of growth
- Affordable annual maintenance agreement

Challenges

The University of Winchester aims to be a beacon, not only for educational excellence, but also for sustainability. One of its key goals, set out in its Strategic Vision 2030, is to be carbon neutral by 2025. To help the university achieve this target, the IT team made the strategic decision to virtualize the server infrastructure. It aimed to decommission as many physical servers as possible to reduce its energy consumption, while maintaining the high availability of its IT services.



The university selected VMware vSphere as its virtualization platform. However, it hit technical issues when trying to migrate across its web-based student records system, as the Microsoft Network Load Balancing (NLB) feature used with this critical application was incompatible with vSphere. The university had already begun to experience short outages and website slowdowns in the student records system, so decided a whole new approach to load balancing was needed.

Solution

Firstly, the University of Winchester required a load balancing solution that was compatible with VMware vSphere; and secondly it needed a solution that it could deploy quickly and easily. Loadbalancer.org solutions met both these criteria and, as the price was well beneath the university's procurement threshold, they could be purchased and installed without delay.

Before signing on the dotted line, however, the university took advantage of a free trial to make sure that the Loadbalancer.org solution would meet its requirements. "This trial was highly successful," recalls Nigel Walters, Senior Systems Specialist at the University of Winchester. "Loadbalancer.org fixed the problem with the website for the student record system within minutes."

Now, more than ten years later, the university is still using virtual solutions from Loadbalancer.org. It has two virtual appliances, across two data centers, which it uses to balance traffic for its public facing website and SITS student records system, as well as its Microsoft Active Directory Federation Services (ADFS) and VMware Horizon VDI system.

Results

The deployment of virtual load balancing solutions from Loadbalancer.org immediately removed the technical barriers preventing migration of a system VMware vSphere and paved the way for the university to pursue a highly successful virtualization strategy. In place of 80 physical servers, the university now has six virtualization hosts. "Around 98% of the university's server infrastructure is now fully virtualized," says Walters.

The university found Loadbalancer.org's solutions to be very easy to set up and use with VMware solutions. Walters simply followed the online guides and had the load balancing functionality for VMware vSphere up and running in under half an hour. "The Loadbalancer.org product is that simple to use," he says. "It just works."

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Ever since the Loadbalancer.org solutions were first installed, the university has experienced consistent reliability from them. In particular, the SITS student records system provides high availability for students and staff, and supports up to 25,000 concurrent connections to the public website. "We can't afford to have any disruption to our public website and student record system," Walters explains. "In ten years of use, the Loadbalancer.org solutions have been extremely reliable".