

Education Success Story: Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center

Scale Computing Overcomes Issues from a Tardy Hardware Refresh for Pennsylvania Technical School

Introduction

Reading Muhlenberg Career & Technology Center (RMCTC) provides career and technical education programming to secondary high school students living in the Muhlenberg and Reading, Pennsylvania school districts and adult students. The educational institution provides attendees with the opportunity to learn up-to-date technical skills in one of 30 programs through hands-on learning activities using state-of-the-art tools and equipment. Through work-based learning opportunities designed to meet the ever-changing demands of business and industry, RMCTC helps students gain the technical and academic skills that will lead to rewarding careers or entry into post-secondary education.

Challenge

Despite its promotion of technology as a way for students to connect with a rapidly changing world and as a tool to help prepare students to meet current and future labor market demands, RMCTC's storage infrastructure was severely outdated and failing, resulting in as much as a 90 percent loss of mission-critical data. EMC CLARiiON servers were five to six years old and had not been upgraded by its outside contractor in some time. The networking backend was more than 10 years old. Its Exchange server was corrupted, as were backups, which inhibited any successful recovery efforts. VMware licenses had lapsed.

Only the school's accounting system, which was on a separate server, remained operational. With a new school year starting, RMCTC needed a quick-and-easy solution to ensure it could continue to meet its educational mandates.

RMCTC recruited Dipal Kapadia as its new IT administrator to overhaul the failing systems and get the IT infrastructure back to where it needed to be. After performing an overnight move from Exchange to Google for its email needs, Kapadia looked for a solution that not only provided necessary services but could be up and running quickly with minimal management for the school's two-person IT team. The father of Kapadia's co-worker was the CTO of a local college and introduced him to Scale Computing.

"There was no way we could have done anything with the hardware we had – we couldn't move forward," said Kapadia. "We were in a position where budget was a concern but wasn't a concern because we were losing everything. To have things running, we had to get something or we weren't going to have anything. Scale gives us everything. When we saw what Scale could provide, it was a no-brainer that we had to go with it in order to recover everything in the timeframe we had to work with."

Solution

Scale Computing's HC3® platform brings storage, servers, virtualization and management together in a single, comprehensive system. With no virtualization software to license and no external storage to buy, HC3 products lower out-of-pocket costs and radically simplify the infrastructure needed to keep applications running.

HC3 products make the deployment and management of a highly available and scalable infrastructure as easy to manage as a single server.

Because of the situation he inherited and understanding he wouldn't have another opportunity for another "fresh start," Kapadia went "a little overboard" by implementing Scale's 8-node cluster despite not needing as much capacity as it provided. The solution was purchased, implemented and all systems fully transferred to it in just two months. Scale provides snapshot capabilities, backups and redundancy needed to ensure RMCTC is not incapacitated again.

"While we didn't need the 8-node cluster, there was a reason for it," said Kapadia. "We didn't want to have the same thing happen again. We wanted to make sure that whatever data we have, we don't lose it. If something goes down, with Scale we're still up and running. Support from Scale has been great. That, in combination with what I can do with Scale, it's just peace of mind."

Since nobody had realized RMCTC's backups were corrupted, Kapadia now has multiple layers of backup with targets in five different locations to ensure availability. Additionally, the school will be implementing Scale's latest SSD platform for faster performance and tiering benefits while keeping its current cluster in place to serve as another layer of redundancy, giving the school "multiple backups of multiple backups."

With Scale's HC3 architecture in place, Kapadia feels confident that the school will be safe from data loss regardless of who is in charge of the small IT department. Scale's simplicity was one of the factors that convinced him that it was the right solution for RMCTC. He said that after using Scale for 3 years, he has become "lazy" from the system's ease of use.

"Scale has made our lives easier. Anything I'm doing, it's much simpler for me to manage. I don't have to worry about a bunch of different things. Anybody can understand it very easily and it doesn't take previous experience to learn what Scale can do and how to fire up a VM. We wanted to make sure that it was something easy to use because if I decide to leave and someone else comes in, I didn't want to make it so that the school had to spend a drastic amount of money to hire a replacement and be back in the same place they were when I first started."

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