



Getting a Top-Notch Education in Virtualization

How SDE Leads the Class with Lower Operating Costs and Higher Efficiency



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» Founded in 1986, Staff Development for Educators serves the professional development of schools, districts, and educators from across the country and around the world. Teaching real-world strategies and practical classroom improvement techniques through seminars, conferences, on-site consulting services, and online learning programs, SDE knows that getting the performance you want is all about proper preparation and planning. That's why SDE turned to a trusted IT partner for a well-designed virtualization solution that helped them reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Keeping Up with a Heavy Course Load

Faced with growing pressure to cut costs while providing the high level of performance his users required, SDE's IT Director, Jerry Stajduhar, knew that his next IT project would require a great deal of planning. His biggest challenge was finding a way to reduce the cost of maintaining his outdated infrastructure. "We have a lot of legacy hardware that was installed 10 years ago, when the economy was better," said Stajduhar. "Now, every single decision of every piece of hardware is hard fought and discussed and considered—and it has certainly been a challenge to keep things up-to-date and fresh."

Tied Up in a Shoestring Budget

SDE was experiencing a problem common to many organizations—the longer they waited between hardware refreshes, the harder it became to ensure adequate backup and redundancy coverage, and the more they had to spend on costly, hard-to-find replacement parts. "With the downturn in the economy, we also had to downsize our staff," said Stajduhar. "So what we really were doing, to be perfectly honest, at the end of the day, was we were just hoping the stuff wouldn't break. I had laid off a part of my helpdesk staff and the network staff... We just banded the stuff that we could and hoped the rest continued to work."

Expert Advice to the Rescue

Unable to budget for improvements to his aging hardware, Stajduhar searched for options that would help him do more with less. It was his PC Connection Account Manager, Tim, who first suggested using virtualization as a way to reduce SDE's costs. Stajduhar recalls, "I have to say the account team was very knowledgeable... I would have conversations with

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[Tim] along the lines of, 'Oh, I'd like to get 2 or 3 new servers but I just can't really afford it. What have you got for the most horsepower I can buy for X amount of money.' And he'd say, 'Well, if you think this one through, maybe a way to look at this is to put more than one solution on one server.' He had a resource of virtualization experts, and he directed me towards them. We had some long conversations about what virtualization could do for me and how you can really leverage what dollars you have. You know, to buy less hardware and get more done."

Do the Math, Save Some Cash

In fact, Stajduhar was so impressed with the claims of what virtualization could do for his organization that he had trouble believing Tim's numbers were correct. "To be perfectly honest, I didn't believe him at all. When I talked to Tim, he explained to me that he had some other customers that had dropped their servers by 90%. And I'm thinking, you know, 'We're in an environment where we have 30 or 40 servers—I'm thinking there's no way we can run this entire company on 3 or 4 servers.' And the reality was, he was pretty close. The bang for your buck on virtualization is pretty much amazing."

The Proof Is in the Planning

With a solution that delivered the high performance and reduced operating costs he needed, Stajduhar found that building a business case for virtualization was an easy task. "The numbers are so compelling that it really wasn't a terrifically difficult argument," said Stajduhar. "It's very difficult to argue with, 'We're going to buy a tenth the number of servers I thought we would, and we can still support the company.'" The team at PC Connection explained the benefits of virtualization and helped Stajduhar assess his organization's requirements and build a plan to fit his needs and budget. Said Stajduhar, "They have a virtualization team that really explained and directed me in the right directions and what hardware to buy."

Resources You Can Rely On

Working with an experienced solutions provider offered many advantages for Stajduhar and his IT staff. "One of the dilemmas I had—and this is where PC Connection was very helpful—" said Stajduhar, "is you don't know what you don't know. When I would have a conversation about how am I going to create the virtual storage on the SAN, if you were to read the manual, it would say, 'make it the optimum size.' Well, I don't know what the optimum size is because I've never done this before. With the support of PC Connection and people that have done this before and have experience in how data grows, how the SAN is able to grow, and the best way to configure devices for access and speed and redundancy—with that support, it was actually pretty smooth. But without that support, I think it would have been impossible. Having a person that could come in and look at our environment and say, 'You want to do RAID 5 here? RAID 10 is really a better solution.' And then have the reason for that... Just having that expertise of having gone down this path and having experienced it, that was worth its weight in gold."

At the end of the project, SDE had accomplished its goal of building a data center that used fewer servers to support the same business needs. While switching to a virtual environment from a traditional one raised several issues for Stajduhar and his staff, having the technical knowledge of a team of virtualization experts made the transition successful.

» Experience the PC Connection Difference

If your organization is looking to reduce costs while improving performance and efficiency, virtualization may be the solution you're looking for. Start your plan off on the right foot by getting all the information you need to make accurate, well-informed decisions.

We offer server and storage assessments to help you understand your organization's needs and your infrastructure's capabilities.

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