

The Bedford College Group Ends Support Woes with Lessons from Nutanix

About The Bedford College Group

Industry: Education

Employees: Nearly 2,000 staff and 18,000 students

Revenue: Nearly £80m

Geo.: UK

Website: <https://bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk>

Solutions

- Two three-node Nutanix clusters with active failover

Applications

- Core staff and student and back-office workloads

Products

- [Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure](#)
- [Prism](#)
- [AHV Virtualization](#)
- [Nutanix Move](#)

Ready to get Hands-On?

[Take a Test Drive](#)

UK's seventh-largest college group was suffering at the hands of legacy equipment but now it has relieved the support issues that plagued it

Business Need

The Bedford College Group is the seventh largest group of colleges in the UK. It was formed in 2017 by the merger of Bedford College and Tresham College and expanded with the addition of Central Bedfordshire College in 2023. Today, it is the biggest education provider in England's south-east Midlands. Over 18,000 students attend one of the Group's campuses, which includes the

National College for Motorsport, near the Silverstone F1 track and community IT training centres.

However, with its legacy VMware virtualization and three-tier architecture creaking alarmingly and entering end-of-life status, the Group desperately needed greater capacity and resilience.

Key Results

Stability.

Previously, the Group spent a disproportionate amount of time on support and just holding together basic services, but with Nutanix now has the resilience to support the needs of students and staff.

A chance to innovate.

With IT staff time being swallowed up by support needs, there was little to no time to think of ways to enhance IT tools and processes... but now there is.

Organisational security and flexibility.

With Nutanix becoming the standard for IT infrastructure and having dispensed with the potential risks of licensing changes arising from Broadcom's acquisition of VMware, the Group can more easily secure, integrate and orchestrate services and backup across sites.



We replaced a legacy VMware three-tier architecture environment which was over capacity with Nutanix all-Flash equipment, increasing performance, reducing downtime and giving the organisation more flexibility. The ability not to have to worry about support is the big difference: Nutanix just works.

Martin Johnson,
Digital innovation specialist, The Bedford
College Group

Challenge

The Bedford College Group was faced with unenviable challenges. It was struggling horribly with capacity and was forced to regularly reboot services to meet staff and student needs, and meanwhile was facing tight budgets to resolve these problems. To function, it needed to address the fact that its legacy three-tier, VMware 6.x-centred architecture was running out of support and it urgently needed to find a new, more flexible and capable solution.

“Solutions were reaching end-of-life and we couldn’t meet the UK government’s Cyber Essentials baseline security standards,” recalled Martin Johnson, digital innovation specialist at the Group.

“We were having to reboot core systems almost daily and often needed to start work at 6 am to ensure we could provide functioning services. There was no resilience or ability to failover. I was spending a few hours per week moving VMs around to find an extra 50GB.”

Solution

Martin added:

“We were looking for something new when we merged with Central Bedfordshire College and they were Nutanix users, working with ET Works, their IT solutions provider. We investigated and spoke to ET Works. It made a lot of sense for us to switch to Nutanix in terms of utilising that experience and our ability to work with each other on an integrated basis and reutilise the Central Bedfordshire nodes. It was both cost-efficient and a known factor, but we would probably still have gone with Nutanix even without that familiarity because the solution it offered was miles ahead of the competition.”

After commencing discussions in December 2022, two clusters of three nodes each were deployed in 2023.

“It was quite a scary time being thrown into the deep end, but Nutanix jumped on this project and got us going alongside ET Works. ET Works was a fantastic partner and helped a lot with scoping and execution. Nutanix Move was a godsend and we moved everything in one week with a team of 15 to 20 staff. Nutanix showed us how it was done, we did it and they made sure it worked. Ultimately, the decision came down to value: Nutanix is competitive, and of course, college budgets can be quite an issue.”

Customer Outcome

Nutanix systems now host all core services from Active Directory to finance, student data and software. The Group reports a performance improvement of up to threefold on core applications. Also, Bedford now enjoys the benefits of active failover with manual synchronisation between Kettering and Bedford sites.

“We are a full Nutanix shop now and the previous server infrastructure just needs removing,” said Martin. Security has revamped for server backups and a one-click process allows for auto-rebooting if issues arise or changes need

to be made.

Martin added: “Complaints have reduced dramatically and we now have the benefit of being able to observe everything through the Nutanix Prism single pane of glass.”

As for VMware, “We jumped ship at the right time,” Martin said. “We didn’t know how bad its licensing model changes were going to be after it was acquired by Broadcom, but they were on our radar and it wasn’t looking so promising. We dodged a bullet.”

Martin has been delighted with the change and what it has meant for IT and the wider organisation:

“What we have today is the ability not to worry... Nutanix just works and if a node goes down people don’t even notice.”

Next Steps

Martin is looking forward to his team becoming even more expert on the Nutanix platform and exploring more of the company’s growing ecosystem of products.

“Learning from customer support has been fantastic and technical materials are fantastic compared to competition... VMware was always a bit lacking. Support is no longer a problem and a massive pain point has been removed. We had to get foundations right as the lack of a solid platform was stopping our ability to work on newer, brighter stuff such as the Microsoft Teams telephony system that has replaced the previous Mitel system.”

Liberated from the shackles of support issues, Martin is seeking to improve user experiences and delight Bedford’s students and staff.

Partner

ET Works are the people who make IT work

We're a company of technical experts with years of collective technology knowledge. We offer independent IT solutions as a value-added re-seller. We can tackle any IT challenge from Cloud to Cybersecurity and we pride ourselves on guiding and supporting our clients through each stage of their IT evolution, providing valued continuity and agility.

And because we're living in a context of constant change, we need to deliver ambitious innovation. Our new, relevant technologies are based on evidence and changing client needs, rather than allegiance to one technology brand.

We're trusted by global brands, partners and clients to diagnose and solve their IT requirements, delivered by real people with a real commitment to enabling people to harness the utility of technology.



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