

Earning high marks with VM and Application as-a-Service for diverse university community



This large multi-campus state university has a diverse and open IT operations structure, with each college and administrative unit in charge of its local IT needs. In addition, a centralized IT services team focuses on offering shared access to certain IT services, including hosted private cloud for dozens of groups and hundreds of end-users.

CHALLENGE: ENABLE RAPID PROVISIONING FOR NON-IT USERS

Originally, the virtual machine (VM) hosting service run by the central IT department at this state university had built its own homegrown portal to serve the university. As a result of new IT priorities, the homegrown portal was no longer a key initiative moving forward. This triggered the need to find a new approach for self-service VM hosting and private cloud that was less brittle and easier to maintain.

The IT team was ready to get out of the “wrench-turning” business of manually provisioning applications and VMs to university end users, many of whom had non-technical skillsets. These users often needed access to IT services after hours or on weekends and desired a self-service approach to provisioning. It was time to find a way to reduce service ticket volume, centralize hosted VM platforms, and up service delivery.



SOLUTION: HYBRID CLOUD APPLICATION ORCHESTRATION

The IT team first connected with Morpheus Data in 2017. Morpheus matched exactly what they were looking for on several fronts. One was value, with Morpheus coming in at the right price point. Speed of integration was another, with Morpheus offering the best integration into vCenter and other out-of-the-box tools.

When looking at other available products, the team found that some were too focused on public cloud. Morpheus hybrid cloud management did a better job balancing on-premises and off-premises cloud. Morpheus also provided a better choice of core functions like application lifecycle automation and backup management.

Security was a critical factor too. Morpheus provided a dedicated environment for secure data. Government grants require a certain level of security before funds are awarded. Morpheus enabled the IT team to meet the university's directive to implement a centralized, governed approach to data security controls.

Once the decision was made to go with Morpheus, the IT team deployed a proof-of-concept (PoC) in a matter of hours, connecting Morpheus to their VMware environment and leveraging existing Ansible automation. Collaboration and communication with the Morpheus team was fast and easy—using a combination of on-site visits, ticketing, and the Slack platform.



TECHNOLOGY STACK
Private Clouds
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VMware vSphere• Dell and EMC
Task Automation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bash• PowerShell
Apps and OS Stacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MariaDB / MySQL• Windows• CentOS• RHEL• Ubuntu
Identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Microsoft Active Directory
Networking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BlueCat
Log Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Splunk

“Morpheus has allowed us to offer a one-stop shop to our end users so they can provision their own virtual machines to fit their needs. Morpheus also gives us the freedom to choose from many public/private cloud vendors with built-in integrations for a seamless workflow.” - IT Manager, Large State University

RESULTS: AFFORDABILITY, SIMPLICITY, AND FLEXIBILITY

Day-to-day operations of the VM-as-a-Service (VMaaS) offering are now running smoothly. All production is done on the Morpheus platform, and users are assigned to groups with different policies and access levels applied for scoping the Morpheus service catalog. As needed, the central IT team at this state university provides its own consulting and 24x7 support service to users in various departments, running application logic on top of VMs.

The university community is happy with the Morpheus-powered VMaaS platform and recognizes the value of self-service. IT departments across the University utilize VM Hosting resources to provide IT services to their Academic Colleges or departments. College administrators, professors, and system admin staff all benefit from the flexibility and time savings that come with VM hosting and as-a-service application.

With easy self-service, they can provision when they want, even if it's at 2:00 a.m. The need to turn in tickets for each request has been eliminated. Data from Morpheus is also used to bill back usage to the university departments. The IT team running the VM hosting service is now looking at enabling the new Morpheus persona user interface (UI). The cloud IT team is also looking at Morpheus with an eye to moving more to public cloud.



ADVICE AND INSIGHT

The IT manager at this large state university offered these words of advice to other higher education IT departments looking to make a cloud management and automation platform purchase:

“Before fully going down a path with a chosen cloud management platform, you should prioritize required features and explore all options before committing to a design layout. Look for a vendor who will collaborate closely as you roll out the project.”



Learn more at www.morpheusdata.com

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