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LEHIGH UNIVERSITY LEANS ON STRATUSPHERE UX FOR TRANSITION TO AMAZON APPSTREAM

> "
> *Stratusphere UX has helped our department do what we do better, and that has helped a lot of people as a result."*
>
> **NAAZER ASHRAF**
> Senior Computing Consultant and Endpoint Engineer at Lehigh University

Organization:
Lehigh University

Desktop Users:
+10,000 faculty, staff, and students

Products:
Stratusphere UX™

The Challenge

Several developments drove Lehigh University to migrate its desktops from the long-used Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops environment to Amazon AppStream on AWS. The university saved licensing costs on the desktops it provides for its more than 10,000 faculty, staff, and students, but the change required its Endpoint and Systems Engineering teams to learn a new environment. As it was planning the transition, the team identified one solution used for its former desktop infrastructure that it was essential to have in the new environment: the Stratusphere™ UX digital experience monitoring and diagnostic solution from Liquidware.

"We are a premier research institution. Students that come here should get a premier desktop experience," says Naazer Ashraf, Senior Computing Consultant and Endpoint Engineer at Lehigh. Students, faculty, and staff all get very powerful desktops and laptops to meet their specific needs, and Naazer's team must keep them running at high performance.

The team relied heavily on Stratusphere UX to do that when it ran a Citrix environment, to provide a comprehensive view of what was happening when users experienced an issue so it could be resolved quickly, and to provide visibility and alerts to prevent problems from occurring in the first place. Lehigh also uses Stratusphere UX to monitor its physical, non-virtual desktops.

"When people have a problem with their computers, they don't know all that's going on at the time, they just tell us what the problem is," says Naazer. "Having Stratusphere UX is really valuable when the complaints come. We can look back and see exactly what was happening when the problem occurred. The various inspectors it offers give us many different views of the data and situation so we can compare, trend and analyze it with high confidence."

The team was worried it would lose some of that visibility when it transitioned from an on-premises Citrix environment to the cloud with Amazon AppStream.

Solution

They needn't have worried. Stratusphere UX has achieved Amazon Web Services (AWS) Digital Workplace Competency status, as has FlexApp, Liquidware's application layering and delivery solution. Lehigh has deep visibility into its Amazon AppStream environment and has used data it has collected to optimize desktop performance in the new environment.

The ease of getting information helps Lehigh troubleshoot many issues quickly. For example, in its legacy Citrix environment, people using resource-intensive CAD software were experiencing slow performance, the assumption was the desktops needed a higher GPU allocation. Data collection and analysis done with Stratusphere UX determined users would get a bigger performance boost if the CPU and memory were upgraded instead of the GPU. "That was a simpler fix than changing the GPU, and it was surprising to a lot of people. The visibility we get from Stratusphere UX makes this kind of honed, precise management possible."

"Stratusphere UX finds the needle in our haystacks," Naazer says, noting his team has been able to identify the root source of problems in hours, when investigations used to take days. "I enjoy the process of finding out what led up to a problem, because it's so easy. This is the type of tool anyone in an endpoint engineering or desktop support role needs."

Results

Because Stratusphere UX helps keep Lehigh's desktops running at an elevated level, the university can keep them running longer – including expensive specialized workstations. "We get a lot of ROI by extending the life of our machines a long time, especially the very powerful workstations," says Naazer. "Stratusphere UX has also been invaluable for extending life cycles of physical machines, especially when you're on tight budgets. I think that is an aspect of the software that many overlook."

The diagnostic and reporting capabilities of Stratusphere UX also have provided Lehigh savings in the procurement processes. When researchers or other users need new desktops, the team uses Stratusphere UX to analyze historical data to do a comprehensive analysis of resource consumption and performance. The reports are used to set the specs for the new devices and, in many cases, it has saved money by preventing buying more power than was actually needed. "I like to right-size our purchases so I'm not recommending more hardware than the research requires. We also encourage our professors to run trials and experiment with different workstations so we can benchmark and analyze the results," says Naazer. "In some cases, that exercise has enabled us to buy two workstations for the amount we thought we'd be spending on one. That way, we can equip more people to be more productive."

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