AppsAnywhere

Customer Spotlight
College of Charleston

How The College of Charleston rapidly responded to the challenges of Covid-19.

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON
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In the age of COVID-19, higher education has been faced with challenges that have motivated rapid adoption of new technologies at an unprecedented pace and scale.

The College of Charleston, a medium-sized liberal arts university in South Carolina, has had many of these technologies on the long-term roadmap, but what would have taken years of planning and campus cultural change have been compressed into the span of months. The delivery of applications to campus stakeholders is perhaps one of the best examples of these urgent needs.

The College of Charleston has been interested in the potential budgetary savings afforded by reduction of institutionally owned computers in computing labs. Further, with the introduction of a student laptop requirement, lab computing resources are in lower demand. However, a key component of lab computers is the delivery of institutionally licensed software applications; many applications are not licensed for installation on BYODs or personally owned systems. Additionally, for applications that have sufficient licensing for personal installation, the diversity of operating systems and system specifications of BYODs precludes the reasonable expectation of application compatibility.

The requirement

Institutions are then faced with an awkward problem: delivering a remote desktop experience for some users with some software applications while delivering local installers for other users with other software applications.

This leads to significant end-user confusion, since contextual awareness is needed for each user's platform and software needs to determine the appropriate course of action. It was clear that a solution was needed that could serve as a one-stop-shop for software needs, regardless of how the experience was delivered.

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) is a common technique for remote software delivery. VDI is frequently an expensive infrastructure to build, from software licensing to hardware procurement and maintenance.

Utilizing existing computer resources in the form of idle lab computers is attractive, but utilizing existing remote desktop services lacks polish and clean integration with the end-user's system. Further, it is incongruent with the intent to reduce lab computer inventories.

Cloud computational resources are easily purchased and scaled, but the high operational cost of cloud resources yield that on-premise resources have a relatively short ROI. However, high up-front costs are difficult to absorb into reduced institutional budgets.

"Campus labs have been a hot topic amongst the Higher Ed IT community for some time now; "Do we really still need them and do they really still have a place in the 21st century university campus?" Although they're typically the easiest way of delivering IT resources to students, the ugly truth is that the traditional campus computer lab doesn't lend itself to the contemporary IT experience that students come to expect."

Nick Johnson - CEO, AppsAnywhere

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The challenge

The challenge is steep: the solution should deliver a one-stop-shop software delivery platform that can automatically choose the best delivery method for a user while respecting licensing agreements of software venders. The solution should minimize the need for on-premise or cloud computational resources by utilizing the local compute power of the BYOD as much as possible.

The user experience should be polished and offer as seamless an integration with the local computing system as possible, including local print and file access. The solution must accommodate a wide variety of operating systems and system specifications.

"The importance of this new service is that it replaces the need for the public computer labs to deliver software."

Mark Staples - The College's CIO and Senior Vice President of the Division of Information Technology (IT)

"We're thrilled to be partnering with the College of Charleston to help them provide an awesome student experience by making their software available both on and off campus, whether it's at home, in dorms, or in the coffee shop! We look forward to learning how student outcomes improve as a result of the College's laser-sharp focus on student success."

Nick Johnson - CEO, AppsAnywhere

The solution

AppsAnywhere was the solution chosen that met these challenges. Through a web portal, a user is given the ability to launch any software application to which their role has given them access. A single “Launch” button for each application automatically assesses a myriad of the user’s contextual attributes to immediately provide the appropriate software delivery method.

Data center VDI hardware is kept to a minimum by utilizing AppsAnywhere’s CloudPaging feature, a technique for enabling local execution of software on a BYOD without the need for installation, which resolves licensing problems with many software vendors. In other cases, the user’s application executes remotely in a VDI environment with local OS integration utilizing AppsAnywhere’s integration with Parallels.

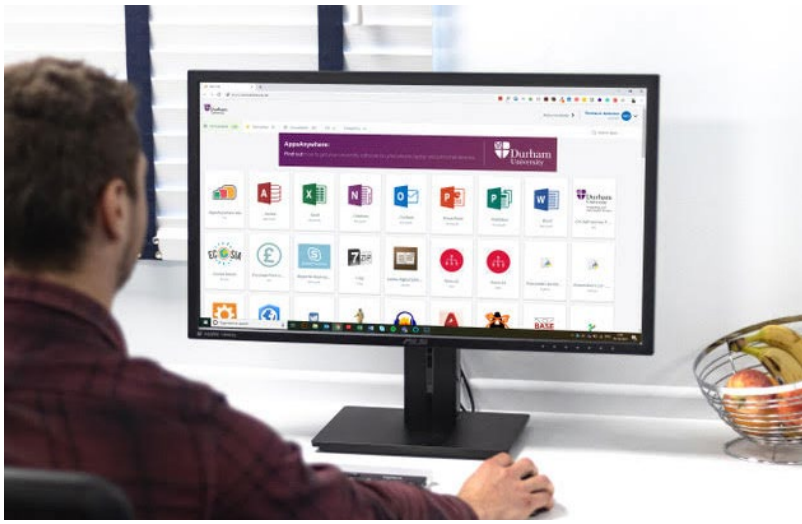
Finally, computer lab resources are also accessible in the form of a remote desktop experience that includes all of the same integrations found with the data center VDI.

The team at AppsAnywhere worked closely with institutional IT resources to implement the platform in the time scale of less than two months.

The College was given the attention needed to deliver this important component of a hybrid and distance learning experience in time for the start of the Fall 2020 semester, enabling success for students and delivering the quality of service the community has come to expect.

“This is a critical component of a successful hybrid and distanced learning semester. The Division of Information Technology has been working hard to bring this powerful new functionality to the College.”

Jason Trinklein - The College’s Associate Director of IT Infrastructure



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