VMware solutions help maintaining business continuity even in most uncertain times

Significantly improved student’s education experience with VMware Horizon

IT management simplified with greater automation and reducing repetitive activities

WSB University in Wrocław offers innovative studying thanks to VMware technologies

WSB University in Wrocław is the largest private university in Poland’s Lower Silesia region, and its graduates actively participate in the region’s economy. The university has an innovative, hands-on approach to education. Using state-of-the-art tools, students can learn to work on specialized software.

WSB has been planning to implement modern IT architecture for a long time due to the growing requirements of students in relation to the availability of university resources. The launch of this service was made possible by the VMware software.

A digital university

The history of WSB University started in 1998, when the first classes in finance and banking took place. Today, the university can boast numerous prizes making it stand out among private universities in Poland. However, in times of digital revolution, traditional learning is not enough.

“It is difficult today to imagine higher education only it’s traditional form with lectures or training rooms. Well selected technologies gives a lot of new opportunities for universities like remote education. Tech-equipped university can not only work within physical walls, but also in a private cloud-type environments. Experiences of recent months strongly show the importance of modern technologies, which were crucial when organizational flexibility was necessary to have possibility to continue education outside the university campus. I am convinced that the basis of education is personal, direct contact with students and interpersonal relations. However, the inability to establish such contact should not be a barrier to the transfer of knowledge. That is why we are ready to educate both in traditional
and online form” – says dr hab. Radosław Kamiński, Dean of the Faculty of Finance and Management at WSB in Wrocław.

**Proven collaboration for innovativeness**

In order to support its growing IT requirements, WSB University in Wrocław needed high-performance solutions which could evolve and adapt to changes. It was essential that the university’s technology infrastructure be ready to support a growing number of systems, and that the entire environment enable effective management without requiring a lot of administrators’ time. Moreover, solutions had to be ready for remote learning in 38 different tech-laboratories used for different educational purposes and need to be share from one mobile-available platform, to easily adjust university study programs to the needs of professionally active students.

“With optimized data algorithms, VMware vSAN increase the performance of the university’s disk array resources by an order of magnitude, which is important in the case of such solutions as virtual desktop infrastructure. Based on them, we conduct specialized labs which often use advanced applications like CAD 3D”, says Mr. Kołodko. “In the case of classes for students, problems with configuring and maintaining traditional computers in labs took about 20% of our time. Now, with VMware technologies, everything runs like clockwork. At the start of classes, each student receives a new virtual PC with exactly the same configuration as the rest of the class.”

Importantly, with VMware solutions administrators can focus on planning, optimizing and preparing the university’s infrastructure for the future.

“The automation offered by technologies such as VMware Horizon enabled us to eliminate repetitive activities, which used to be a commonplace. There were situations where it was necessary to modify the software in computer labs so that classes within various fields of study could take place there. Thanks to VMware technology, these activities are a thing of the past,” concludes Mr. Kołodko.

**Business continuity in uncertain times**

The VMware solutions used by WSB University in Wrocław improve its quality of teaching every day, as virtualization provides students with access to various desktops with various operating systems from a single device.

“VMware gives our students access to as many computers as they like, which are always up-to-date and secure. It significantly improves their education experience and enables them to get acquainted with a wide range of solutions that they may later use in their career,” says Mr. Kołodko.

“VMware solutions enable us to set up 100 virtual machines in less than 3 minutes. We already provide our students with over 1,000 virtual desktops, and we have the necessary resources to generate another thousand,” says Mr. Kołodko.

However, the VMware technologies implemented by Advatech are only partly responsible for VDI resources. With VMware vSAN, the university has a separate high-performance management cluster and a cluster for the university’s administrative units.

“From the perspective of the entire university, the environment based on VMware vSAN and VMware Horizon is also characterized by high security. Software-defined solutions for encrypting data at rest protect them against unauthorized access, which reduces the risk of data leaks and the related reputational and financial losses.

What really proved the solutions’ worth, however, was the COVID-19 pandemic. WSB University has 38 computer labs in 3
buildings. Most of them use the virtual desktop technology. VMware technologies have been used by them as a standard for a long time and enabled the university to seamlessly switch to remote learning during lockdown.

“VMware Horizon enabled us to switch to the new way of working and remote teaching in less than two days, so the university could maintain its business continuity,” explains Mr. Kołodko. “We still needed to adapt the functioning of administrative structures to the new conditions, but within one week of the suspension of classes, students could continue the education process in safe conditions, at home, from their mobile devices.”

The university provided students with access to virtual desktops 24/7, for an entire week. Moreover, lecturers could use the HelpDesk module which enabled them to gain quick access to the desktop of any particular student and interact with them (intercept the mouse, provide remote assistance etc.) to quickly help them during classes.

In uncertain times we are now living VMware solutions are not just an option, but a prerequisite for maintaining business continuity,” says Mr. Kołodko.

During the pandemic, WSB University in Wrocław made its labs available to other banking universities in Poland. This clearly shows that VMware vSAN and VMware Horizon may be a significant differentiator in the market of private universities, and a model for digitization processes.

“This proves that the VDI technology we chose has worked very well for us. With VMware we were pioneers, we tested the solutions and we could recommend them and make them available to other universities” – concludes Radosław Kamiński.

Looking ahead
Changing the form of education from traditional to distance learning may, however, be a permanent trend followed by other Polish universities. Owning more and more modern technological facilities is a guarantee of maintaining an appropriate market position. WSB University in Wrocław plans to further develop its virtualization environments and increase the number of systems dedicated to meeting specific student needs.