CASE STUDY

Nerdio Makes the Dean's List: Powering University of North Florida's Digital Transformation

Learn how Nerdio Manager for Enterprise better enabled this public university's seamless transition to the cloud while saving 56% per month on their Azure bill and substantially helping their busy endpoint management team.

nerdio

UNF UNIVERSITY of NORTH FLORIDA.

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Following the appointment of its new CIO in 2021, the University of North Florida (UNF) undertook a major strategic initiative to digitally transform and migrate to the cloud to better serve the student body, faculty, and staff. The nationally ranked public university with an annual enrollment of about 17,000 students had been running an on-premises environment. However, gaps in functionality and the defined set of hardware limited UNF's finite resources, meaning they needed to source a new path forward.

Once the digital transformation was underway, UNF's endpoint management team began the transition to Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD). The new platform was more agile, had improved performance, and generally better met the university's needs, but the native capabilities were limited, making it challenging to manage and automate.

During UNF's proof of concept (POC) with Microsoft, an engineer walked Michael Holmes, Assistant Director of Endpoint Management at UNF, through the AVD platform.

"As we were reviewing configuration and setup, I saw both how powerful and complex the technology was," recalled Holmes. "But at the same time, it was evident how much specific knowledge would be required of my team to optimally operate and manage it."

The Microsoft engineer confessed Azure had a unique learning curve, but he had a suggestion: "Let me tell you about this thing called Nerdio."

NERDIO MANAGER FOR ENTERPRISE 101

Holmes was excited about the Nerdio capabilities and the engineer's glowing endorsement, so UNF moved forward with the implementation of AVD plus Nerdio Manager for Enterprise.

"Nerdio filled all the holes we perceived initially with the AVD offering," Holmes said. "We are a small team expected to keep up to seven endpoint management platforms in tip-top shape.

We don't necessarily have the resources across our organization to dedicate to doing it manually, so a tool like Nerdio that can automate so much has been invaluable for us. In fact, even if we had a dedicated employee solely responsible for AVD management, I'm not sure it would be enough without Nerdio."

With over 200 AVD management features to choose from, the UNF team's favorite features include:

Reporting and dashboards

A key feature of Nerdio Manager that makes Holmes and his team more efficient is the customizable, unified management dashboard that provides visibility into usage patterns and shifts across the university.

"The dashboard helps me better understand Nerdio's Auto-scaling features and make adjustments accordingly to maximize our resources and cloud spend," stated Holmes. "The host pool view, for instance, provides so much information in a single snapshot including the number of users on, the number of hosts, et cetera. With that insight, I can better fine-tune our controls to accommodate traffic spikes and dips across the organization and ensure we're only paying for what we use."

Reducing admin work via automation

Nerdio has been instrumental in decreasing unnecessary admin work for Holmes and his team. For example, UNF initially had an issue with its Azure file share getting full, but with Automatic Storage Auto-scaling and resizing in Nerdio, Holmes can just set and forget.

Similarly, image management has been drastically simplified. The endpoint management team can quickly update an image and automate Windows updates into the image with a single script.

Burst Capacity for Host Pools

Burst Capacity for Host Pools was what really sold Holmes on the need for Nerdio.

"You can size your host pool the way you want, and when you don't need those resources anymore, you can just get rid of them and no longer incur those costs," Holmes marveled. "This functionality has been a real game changer for us."

A+ RESULTS

Following the highly visible rollout of AVD and Nerdio Manager for Enterprise, the endpoint management team received fantastic feedback from end users who had never had a cloud-based virtual desktop experience.

"AVD was much faster than the previous infrastructure, but we knew if there was an outage or any other snags with the platform, we'd definitely be hearing about it," recalled Holmes. "Nerdio provided us with peace of mind — it's almost like a safety blanket. Unlike with our previous virtualization solution, I no longer have to sit around

to see if machines are being over-utilized. I don't need to move users around or re-image my hosts in the middle of the day. Nerdio handles it all gracefully, ensuring a seamless user experience."

"Nerdio easily pays for itself from a fiscal perspective, but how do you measure the intrinsic value of doing more with less?" Holmes asked rhetorically. "The impact on human capital and quality of life for my lean team has been phenomenal. The functionality of the platform has been a huge time saver, plus the folks at Nerdio have really become an extension of our department. They are truly invested in our success and in creating a positive experience for our end-users."

Far beyond the POC, the Nerdio team keeps Holmes abreast of the latest features and strategies to improve efficiency as UNF continues on its digital transformation journey.

"I think it's safe to say we'll be partnering with Nerdio as long as we use AVD," said Holmes.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

The University of North Florida is one of 12 public universities in Florida, which is ranked the #1 state in the country for higher education by U.S. News & World Report. A comprehensive, urban research university located in Jacksonville, UNF is home to nearly 17,000 students and six colleges: the Brooks College of Health, the Coggin College of Business, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Computing, Engineering and Construction, the College of Education and Human Services and the Hicks Honors College.

The University of North Florida is an emerging force in research in health, coastal sciences, logistics and more. UNF offers 64 bachelor's degrees with 80 areas of concentration, 45 master's degrees with 88 areas of concentration, and six doctoral degrees with three areas of concentration.
https://www.unf.edu/catalog/about/index.html

ABOUT NERDIO

Nerdio adds value on top of the powerful capabilities in Azure Virtual Desktop, Windows 365, and Microsoft Intune by delivering hundreds of features that simplify management, ensure efficient operations, and lower Azure compute and storage costs by up to 80% via automation.

Enterprise IT professionals can deliver and maintain a wide range of virtual Windows endpoints and Windows applications across hybrid workforces with ease and fine-tune end-user computing (EUC) approaches for maximum effectiveness using powerful monitoring and analytics capabilities.

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