

Nerdio Manager for Enterprise:

The Denholm Group's journey with Nerdio and Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop



Industry: Shipping and Logistics

Platform: Nerdio Manager for Enterprise

Region: Global

RESULTS

Saved nearly \$900 (£700) per month.

Can now accurately assess resources needs with intuitive dashboards.

Achieved significant disaster recovery improvements.



Challenges

- Struggled with managing IT infrastructure, especially remote desktop environments.
- Faced complexities and inefficiencies with the existing setup.



Solutions

- Aligned cloud strategy with Azure for improved IT management.
- Implemented Nerdio for a comprehensive AVD management solution.
- Streamlined operations and addressed previous inefficiencies.

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get started?**

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As a fifth-generation family business, The Denholm Group has always prioritized longevity and adaptability.

Over the years, the company has diversified into four distinct divisions—Shipping, Logistics, Seafoods, and Industrial Services—with a global footprint and a workforce of up to 1,700 staff worldwide.

Despite its rich legacy, Denholm faced a significant challenge in managing its IT infrastructure, particularly its remote desktop environments. With a staggering 1,000 IT users and dozens of line-of-business applications required across its diverse portfolio, the company encountered numerous complexities and inefficiencies with its existing remote desktop services (RDS) setup. This posed a significant obstacle to maintaining seamless operations and hindered Denholm's ability to adapt to the evolving needs of its workforce and clients.

Voyage to the cloud

In 2019, Denholm embarked on a transformative journey towards a cloud-first strategy, driven by the burdens associated with maintaining physical hardware and physical data centers, plus heavy reliance on NetApp investments.

The decision to transition to the cloud was not taken lightly, especially for a company of Denholm's scale and heritage. However, with hardware costs averaging more than \$650,000 (£500,000) every few years, Denholm recognized the potential for significant savings by migrating to a consumption-based RevEx model.

After briefly exploring alternative solutions, Denholm eventually chose to align its cloud strategy with Azure, leveraging its existing investment in the Microsoft ecosystem and enterprise licenses. By transitioning to Microsoft Azure and Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD), Denholm aimed to not only reduce wasted resources but also unlock new opportunities for growth.

"Leveraging AVD during the COVID-19 pandemic was a strategic move for us," said Lloyd Williams, Senior Azure Engineer, The Denholm Group. "We needed to implement multifactor authentication, which didn't play nice with our existing RDS setup. AVD not only addressed this issue, but when we realized we wouldn't have to worry about infrastructure and managing the backend environment, it made the full transition an easy decision. But while the AVD technology itself is robust, the toolset surrounding it was quite lacking."

Smooth sailing for IT

When first using AVD, Denholm had heavily relied on reservations. However, as these reservations approached their expiration, the company began looking into auto-scaling tools to optimize resource allocation.



Exploring various free tools provided some assistance in bridging operational gaps. While these tools offered partial automation, they left a lot to be desired and still required a lot of manual work.

It was then that Lloyd discovered Nerdio and championed the platform internally. Nerdio Manager for Enterprise offered a comprehensive solution that met all their requirements and streamlined the AVD management process.

"It's hard to even remember pain points that just aren't there anymore thanks to Nerdio," Lloyd continued. "But ultimately the benefit for Denholm lies in how the technology improves efficiencies across the board."

Leveraging Nerdio's intuitive dashboards, Denholm can accurately assess resource needs across the entire AVD estate to better inform Nerdio's auto-scaling feature. This not only benefits the bottom line but also contributes to a more sustainable approach to resource management.

Additionally, Nerdio's single pane of glass interface has proven to be invaluable for Denholm's Service Desk, providing a centralized hub for streamlined operations compared to the basic tools provided by Microsoft.

Image management with Nerdio has also been remarkably straightforward, simplifying the process and saving time. Automation features, such as host auto-scaling and deployment, have enabled IT to schedule tasks during off-peak hours, minimizing disruptions to business operations. Furthermore, Nerdio's auto-recovery functionality has been vital in maintaining system health, automatically resolving issues without requiring manual intervention and ensuring uninterrupted workflows for Denholm's IT team.

SOS: Disaster recovery with Nerdio

The Denholm team recently scheduled their first major disaster recovery (DR) test following their transition to the cloud. Leveraging Nerdio's support, they successfully executed this critical test with ease. The primary objective was to ensure the availability of their AVD environment while minimizing unnecessary costs.



Nerdio support facilitated the setup of a secondary instance of Nerdio in another data center, effectively establishing a failover mechanism. By simply enabling auto-scaling, Denholm's IT team could entrust Nerdio to manage the environment autonomously while they focused on other aspects of the restoration process.

"The first DR test was a huge success for the business. We were able to test all of our line-of-business applications, and everything worked perfectly," said Lee Peden, IT Operations Manager and Denholm employee of 17 years. "We knew this was going to work, but we were astounded by the speed. We started at 6 p.m., left around midnight, and by lunchtime the next day, everything was wrapped up."

With so many different companies under the Denholm umbrella, each requiring specific line-of-business applications and desktops across three different images, this was a remarkably expedient timeline.

"If this had been a real disaster scenario, without Nerdio, we'd be looking at hours of time and resources diverted to purely getting AVD back up and running, building from scratch, and pushing out up to 30 hosts — not even considering everything else being thrown at us in the interim to implement DR," noted Lloyd.

Anchors aweigh!

Since implementing Nerdio, Denholm has scaled to 450 Nerdio seats. In the past year, the auto-scaling feature has already saved the organization nearly \$900 (£700) per month, all while ensuring compute power is readily available for employees when needed.

Nerdio Manager for Enterprise has also saved Lloyd countless hours of unnecessary administrative work, allowing him to focus on higher-level initiatives that align with the business' goals. Additionally, end users are pleased with the agile virtual desktop solution, finding it more accessible and user-friendly.

"On top of the benefits of the technology itself, the Nerdio team is extremely knowledgeable, adaptable, and always willing to go the extra mile," added Lloyd. "The Nerdio support team was excited to be able to help us out with DR and viewed the experience as an opportunity to test the platform in new and different ways — not as a potential upcharge. This is one of many reasons why we trust Nerdio as a true business partner versus just another vendor."

Lloyd concluded, "Hopefully we never have to invoke a proper disaster recovery scenario, but it's nice to know that if we do, out of all the problems we'll face, Nerdio won't be one of them."

About the Denholm Group

The Denholm Group operates four divisions: Shipping, Logistics, Seafoods, and Industrial Services. The Group was originally founded as a ship agent and factor by James Denholm in 1866, who was joined in the business by his brother John in 1869. Today, the fifth-generation family business is still owned by John's descendants. With their roots in shipping and maritime services, the Denholm Group companies have evolved into businesses that work collaboratively with their customers and stakeholders. The Group employs over 1,600 people, who work to the principles of the 'Denholm Standard': upholding the law, integrity, fairness, and respect.

About Nerdio

Nerdio is a leading provider of powerful, simplified cloud management solutions for businesses of all sizes. Trusted by managed service providers (MSPs) and enterprise IT departments alike, Nerdio equips organizations with seamless, cost-effective management tools for Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD), Windows 365, and comprehensive Modern Work solutions.

With thousands of customers worldwide, Nerdio accelerates cloud adoption, enabling companies to thrive in an era of hybrid work by providing modern, future-proof technology that adapts to evolving workplace needs.

For more information, please visit www.getnerdio.com.