

Data Centre Modernisation  
**Aston University**  
Case Study

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# Modernising infrastructure to support increasing demands and requirements

## About Aston University

With its focus on the application of knowledge for economic and social benefit, Aston University has a distinct mission. From its foundation as the Birmingham Municipal Technical School in 1895, through the granting of University status in 1966, to the present day it retains its focus on this core purpose.

Aston University caters for nearly 15,000 students, delivering social mobility by helping them acquire the skills, confidence and knowledge they need to make a successful career in business, industry and the professions.

This focus enables them to explore and fulfil individual potential; fostering their initiative and creativity as responsible global citizens, imaginative thinkers and successful entrepreneurs.

Aston's ethos is to be the UK's leading University for business and the professions, where original research, enterprise and inspiring teaching deliver global impact. In order to achieve this, Aston requires its information and ICT environment to support this vision.

## The Challenge

The effectiveness and efficiency of the Aston University IT Infrastructure directly affects the growing number of students and staff who use the systems on a daily basis. Therefore, it is crucial that these IT services are built on an infrastructure that is secure, robust, and scalable.

Aston's current infrastructure was ageing, the hardware unsupported and additional resources were needed to provide capacity for improving performance and resilience. Aston required expert advice to define and source a new modern system and build a platform for improved performance and reliability.

### Industry:

Education

### The Challenge:

An ageing infrastructure was not meeting the University's increasing demands and requirements.

### Solution:

MTI helped design, supply, install and support a new customised hyperconverged infrastructure platform to support the University's staff and student facing systems

### Benefits:

- Improved system performance.
- Additional capacity with easy scalability.
- Reduced operating costs
- Simplified operations and easier manageability.
- Platform support outsourced to dedicated experts.
- Improved management of maintenance schedules.
- Enhanced disaster recovery capability.

## The Solution

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Aston recognised the need to replace its old VMware SAN & server infrastructure and required a solution that supports its student facing systems as they flex and grow. The university did have some existing VxRail systems onsite, but they were not in active production due to the lack of design and configuration skills in house. MTI worked directly with Aston to design, validate and deploy a new flexible solution combining new and existing infrastructure.

The University decided on a stretched vSphere cluster to replace its traditional SAN and separate server infrastructure. Hyper-converged infrastructure was a core feature of the solution as the vSphere workload was small, storage volumes weren't excessive and Aston favoured the modular approach of VxRail.

MTI helped configure the existing infrastructure as well as define and ratify the overall solution to ensure it supports both the student and staff environments.

MTI also managed the implementation of the full solution in tandem with Aston's own internal infrastructure team to ensure sufficient knowledge transfer. This helped ensure project timelines were met and DellEMC configuration approvals and firmware updates occurred seamlessly.



## Results

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The new infrastructure immediately improved the performance of the systems, providing the University with additional capacity, and the flexibility to add further capacity later as demand grows. Resiliency and redundancy were enhanced and operating overheads and management costs were reduced.

The stretched clusters extend the vSAN across two sites to improve availability and load balancing. This also helps Aston manage planned maintenance and provides an improved level of disaster recovery as loss of one site does not affect the operation of the overall cluster.

## Why MTI

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MTI has invested significantly in dedicated expertise to help support its customers transform their IT environments and leverage the power of new technologies and architectures.

Aston has been working with MTI since 2009 and relies on MTI's specialist knowledge and service expertise to help them make the most of their technology investments.

MTI's efficiency, technology expertise, understanding of customer needs and focus on customer satisfaction is what maintains the relationship. This is why Aston views MTI as a long-term technology partner to the University.



**The infrastructure at Aston is constantly changing to meet the needs of the organisation, things never stay still**

Trevor Bayliss,  
IT Technical Director,  
Aston University



## About MTI

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Over the last 35 years, we've helped thousands of organisations to transform their IT environments, enabling them to embrace new technologies like cloud while reducing operating costs, increasing profitability and mitigating risk. We employ proven methodologies and best practices and adopt a consultative approach to help our customers solve business challenges, providing secure, compliant management of their applications, data, infrastructure, and environments.

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