# Moulton College
## Rescuing and optimising an unstable desktop environment

When the newly-installed virtualized desktop infrastructure at Moulton College failed on the first day of the new academic year, the induction process for new students was severely disrupted. Cutter stepped in to quickly stabilise the desktop environment and then subsequently worked with the college to completely transform the desktop experience for students and staff.

## Challenges Faced

To improve facilities for its 8000 students, the further education provider Moulton College had built a substantial extension to its learning resources centre, creating capacity for 200 additional workspaces. The small IT team was concerned about its ability to manage such a big increase in the number of PCs within the college and so appointed a large IT vendor to install thin clients and create a virtualized desktop infrastructure (VDI) for the centre. The technology was implemented over the summer holidays, but when the enrolment of new students began in the first week of September, everything began to crash.

"The instability of the VDI disrupted the college's IT inductions, held up initial skills' assessments and prevented students from accessing the virtual learning environment at a critical time, at the start of the new academic year," says Giles Batchelor, Network Development and Services Manager at Moulton College. "Staff and students were struggling with the new desktops, and it soon became clear that our appointed IT vendor wasn't going to be able to resolve the problems quickly enough."

### Cutter made all the difference by:

- Stabilising failing desktops with a quick and creative temporary solution

- Optimising the performance of an unsatisfactory VDI, installed by another vendor

- Understanding and meeting the college's original VDI aspirations

- Having the skills to more than double the number of desktops over four sites

## Services Provided

The IT team at Moulton College turned to Cutter for help after being introduced to the company by one of its hardware suppliers. Much to everyone's relief, Cutter managed to stabilise desktop performance very rapidly by designing and deploying a stop-gap solution based on Microsoft terminal services. "Cutter demonstrated incredible ingenuity in finding a quick and practical solution to our problems," says Batchelor. "The team came in on Friday evening and by Monday morning we had stable, functioning desktops."

This temporary solution stayed in place for six months, because it took the original IT vendor this length of time to finally deliver a VDI that worked satisfactorily. Unsurprisingly, the college didn't go back to this organisation when it subsequently wanted to upgrade and expand its VDI; it approached Cutter instead.

In the five years since then, Cutter has worked closely with the college, increasing the number of thin clients from 300 to 800 and extending the VDI beyond the learning resources centre to classrooms and offices across the main college campus, as well as at three satellite teaching centres twenty miles away. "Cutter almost works as a part of my IT team now," says Batchelor. "The company has helped me to transform the VDI into what I originally wanted it to be."

Significantly, Cutter has made a series of incremental improvements in the performance of the virtualized desktops over this period.  It has also recommended and deployed a range of creative solutions to give the college more flexibility in how it publishes desktops through the VMware Horizon platform. "The skills of Cutter employees are always developing as new technologies emerge," notes Batchelor. "If a new product is right for Moulton College, I know that Cutter will already have the skills to implement it."

## Results Achieved

After the nightmare of its initial VDI deployment, Moulton College now has a large, stable virtualized desktop environment that meets the high performance expectations of students and members of staff.  Indeed, the IT team is so confident in the reliability of its VDI that it now uses it for an increasing number of critical management systems, including core applications for student enrolments.

Operating optimally, the VDI is now very effective in reducing the amount of time that the IT team has to spend on desktop management and maintenance tasks. "There is no way that we could manage the number of desktops that we now have, with the same size team, if they were all on PCs," states Batchelor. "I would have needed to grow the IT team by at least another two IT professionals, and even with this larger team, I suspect we still would have been fire-fighting."

All students at Moulton College benefit from access to a standard, high-performance desktop service and those who are being taught at remote centres are not disadvantaged in any way from being at a smaller site. "Moulton College aims to provide all students with the same education experience and opportunities for learning," explains Batchelor. "The VDI enables us to ensure that every student is getting the same desktop performance and the same access to applications, whether they are on our main site or at one of our satellite centres."

Moulton College now has a flexible and scalable desktop infrastructure that will meet its needs for many years to come and an IT partner that it can rely on for inspiration and support. Indeed, Batchelor describes Cutter as "vital" to the future of the college. He says, "Cutter has become a trusted, strategic partner. It will undoubtedly play a key role in helping me to achieve my long term plans and eventually bring almost all of the college's desktops into the VDI fold."