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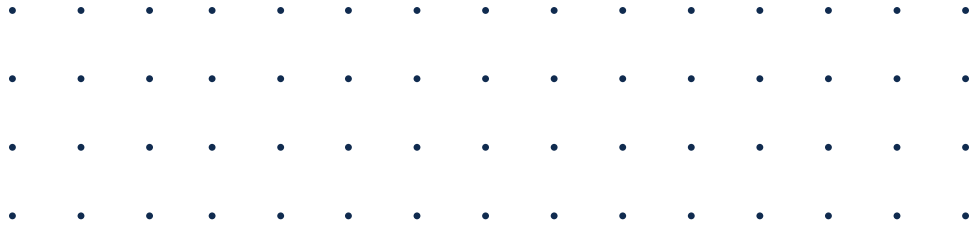ParkPlaceTechnologies.com

CASE STUDY

The Open University

STEM Mission Sharpened by DMSO Approach to Data Center

Paul Alexander is Head of Technical Services for the STEM faculty at The Open University, which counts among its alumni Oscar winner Julie Christie, singer-songwriter Joan Armatrading and IT entrepreneur Natalya Kaspersky.

The STEM Faculty is the largest of the university's faculties with 700 staff and 1800 associate lecturers. We deliver over 185 modules across the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum, this equates to 20,000 full time equivalent students which is 29% of the university total. In addition, we have world leading researchers contributing to the university research outputs, which in turn feeds into the Research Excellence Framework submission (REF2020) as well as numerous international research projects.

Alexander oversees STEM's complex technology development and technology utilization plan, managing all information technology resources of the faculty. He has primary day-to-day responsibility for technology management of operations in terms of planning, developing, implementing, managing, growing, and maintaining availability, efficiency, and financial viability of all technology related components within STEM. Collaborating with the STEM Senior Management team, Paul helps to define and deliver on short-term goals and the longer-term roadmap for the faculty.

"My role is as wide and varied as would be expected in the IT sector. The key thing is looking after the strategy for the whole of the STEM faculty, trying to build up on the two key things we have -- the research that the University does, and the course teaching. We try to keep those synergies going," he said. "My teams support everything from the digital side

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY STATS

- Founded in 1969
- Largest UK university by undergraduate student numbers
- Main Campus in Milton Keynes, UK
- STEM Faculty has 20,000 full time equivalent enrolled students
- STEM is the largest faculty with 700 staff and 1,800 associate lecturers

" The human element of the relationship with Park Place Technologies has been really positive, with both sales staff and technical field engineers. It's very clear that Park Place has instilled a very positive attitude and hires 'can-do' people in all areas. Field engineers don't seem as rushed as vendor support engineers that we've had in the past; they really want to take the time to make sure that the problem is solved, the first time. "

Paul Alexander
Head of Technical Services, STEM Faculty

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

of things with the back-end infrastructure and servers, through software development, mobile app development, etc. Some of this will make its way into courses. So often things which will start out as research projects will end up in teaching."

THE ISSUE

Open University's STEM Faculty IT infrastructure is critical to accomplishing its mission.

"Uptime, security and monitoring IT infrastructure are more critical mandates than they ever were before. We have a significant number of OEMs --Dell, HPE, IBM and older storage. We have a few hundred assets from two different very wide and varied legacy IT infrastructure portfolios that we're trying to combine. As such, we're going to have a huge portfolio of equipment that will be coming under the same banner," Alexander said. "Plus, our site is very different to a lot of other sites in terms of the complicated nature of the network and firewalls and how that is setup. Any solution we use is going to have to do a bunch of work around that. I was unhappy with the existing maintenance that we were dealing with, and looking for solutions to support our mission-critical IT."

THE SOLUTION

Alexander said Park Place has been able to work with STEM on supporting its wide range of equipment, through DMSO (Discover, Monitor, Support, Optimize), a simplified and automated approach to Discovering, Monitoring, Supporting and Optimizing digital infrastructures. DMSO maximizes Uptime, creates cost efficiencies, enables greater infrastructure control and visibility, and enhances asset performance. A key element of DMSO is ParkView Hardware Monitoring™, which delivers an automated monitoring service and will extend beyond the hardware layer into software to include both operating systems and virtual servers.

"The ParkView™ solution has been a game changer for us," Alexander said. "In terms of support, it offers something which no one else really offers. The key thing is that often

COMMON VISIONS FOR STEM

Park Place is a very active STEM supporter, an alignment Alexander appreciates. In addition to providing resources and volunteers for global STEM initiative for groups such as Coder Dojo and Girl Scouts of America, Park Place sponsors an annual internship that brings two international college women to the U.S. for a full tech immersion experience.

"Park Place is very focused on STEM, particularly in their support of getting more young women into STEM, something I admire. During the Covid-19 crisis, something we at the Open University have been particularly proud of is our work on the OpenSTEM labs. These facilities allow our students to connect in remotely, performing STEM experiments anytime of the day or the night," Alexander said. "We push STEM and how technology can be used to further the subject in the future. The work we've done with Park Place helps us keep systems running and goes hand in hand with their STEM mission and ours. I'm very proud that we have this synergy. It's very heartening for me to know that Park Place has a great interest in STEM specifically, and we're both trying to break boundaries and do good things in that area."

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Paul Alexander
Head of Technical Services, STEM Faculty

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ParkView would know about a problem and notifies us about that rather than us discovering a problem and then we have to report the issue. It also offers the ability to have extracted logs prior to the call being raised. So we're in a position where usually, with the standard third party maintenance scenario, the first thing that happens when we report something is we would have to identify it, get the request for logs, send the logs over, and then we have this discussion, and then the logs go missing, and it takes a while for us to go through this process. ParkView just removes us from that process, enabling us to concentrate on keeping our IT and our department functioning."

> " I think the industry as a whole is likely to move towards DMSO. "
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> **Paul Alexander**
> Head of Technical Services,
> STEM Faculty
>
> **THE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

"So, not only does ParkView identify the problem straight away, it's already got the log, so it reduces the amount of time that my staff have to spend actually working on all the intricacies around the ticket. The automation process is seamless and certainly helps us in reducing the time it would typically take to sort this out, had we not had ParkView."

THE OUTCOME

Alexander said ParkView and DMSO are future-proofing his data center and its IT infrastructure.

"DMSO is something which is a positive for the industry. Park Place is able to lead on that because they've defined it. They understand where the industry is going," he said. "Obviously there's a lot going into the cloud, and in some cases, it's going to be a hybrid. I feel like the industry needed to find a new direction and DMSO is an evolution.

"It's very clear a lot of people who run data centers don't know what equipment they have. So the first problem that you need to solve on the road map is discovery, and that's key as part of DMSO. Once you discovered it, you need monitoring. And if these things were integrated well, like through ParkView, that's a winning solution. I think then the natural progression from that is to support. Optimization totally goes hand in hand from there, and it covers a multitude of different platforms.

"I think the industry as a whole is likely to move towards DMSO."

IT REVOLUTION, HUMAN EVOLUTION

Alexander said that while Park Place is revolutionizing IT, it is keeping its customer service culture thriving. As a member of the Park Place Client Advisory Board (CAB), he can directly impact that culture.

"The CAB is fundamental because any company that we're working with that takes the time to really understand its customers' needs is always going to score highly," he said. "The CAB gives me the opportunity to talk with other peers. Park Place is investing in its clients, and I'm happy to give that back because it gives me a real opportunity to have input into their road map. It's been Incredibly thought-provoking and positive. Often the CAB meetings have been held around events like Gartner conferences, so it's giving me access to that as well."

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Alexander noted STEM's growth strategy requires technological innovation that maintains human partnership.

"Critical business transformations are evolving. We built the OpenSTEM labs allowing our students to log in at any time of the day or night and they can actually perform experiments that then get reset," he said. "That's key to our business. And it's setting us apart from the competition in many ways. It's technology, but it's all about human connection and how we interact with our students."

"The human element of the relationship with Park Place has been really positive, with both sales staff and technical field engineers. It's very clear that Park Place has instilled a very positive attitude and hires can-do people in all areas. Field engineers don't seem as rushed as vendor support engineers that we've had in the past; they really want to take the time to make sure that the problem is solved, the first time."

DISCOVER | MONITOR | SUPPORT | OPTIMIZE

DMSO is a simplified and automated approach to Discovering, Monitoring, Supporting and Optimizing digital infrastructures to maximize uptime, create cost efficiencies, enable greater IT infrastructure control and visibility, and enhance IT asset performance.

DISCOVER – Holistic, accurate listing of data center assets across OEMs, with automated IT asset discovery and dependency mapping and comprehensive coverage of servers (physical, virtual, and cloud), desktops, edge devices and peripherals;

MONITOR – Server and storage monitoring hardware (storage, server and network) and software (OS Monitoring, Linux, Windows, VM)

SUPPORT – Event filtering and remediation for hardware, operating systems and network hardware (predictive/proactive alerting and ticket integration) OS remediation (patch management, updates) and network incidents (management, configuration, root cause);

OPTIMIZE – Enable client efficiencies and ensure uptime with capacity management, CPU utilization and cloud cost controls).

ABOUT PARK PLACE TECHNOLOGIES

Park Place Technologies, founded in 1991, simplifies the management of complex technology environments for more than 17,000 customers worldwide. We provide exceptional global service for data center storage, server and network hardware for all tier one OEM equipment. Our worldwide network of more than 400,000 parts stored regionally, locally and on-site allows for fast parts distribution and service to drive Uptime.

Park Place responded to customer input and created a new technology service category – Discover, Monitor, Support, Optimize (DMSO) – a fully integrated approach to managing critical infrastructure. Our industry-leading and award-winning services include ParkView™ Managed Services, Entuity software, and our Enterprise Operations Center.

With Park Place Technologies, customers are maximizing Uptime, improving operational speed, eliminating IT chaos, and boosting return on investment – ultimately accelerating their digital transformation.

Park Place supports 58,000+ data centers in 150+ countries. | For more information, visit us at ParkPlaceTechnologies.com.