Enriching education and technology through agile resource management

SMMUSD's classroom transformation using VMware solutions from Meridian IT

SNAPSHOT

SMMUSD
SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Established in 1876 with a classroom of 52 students, SMMUSD has grown to serve 11,000 students, enriching its pupils with its robust Regional Occupation Program and Career Technical Education.

- Students are taught how to learn, discovering and developing an appetite for knowledge.

- This approach has not only resulted in a combined graduation rate of about 95% for the district's high school students, but has also led to Santa Monica and Malibu High Schools being rated at the top in the State and Nation.

EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Headquartered in the diverse seaside communities of Santa Monica and Malibu, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District is home to several elementary, middle, and high schools. The district also operates eleven early childhood education centers and an adult school, which provide vulnerable students the opportunity to receive adequate learning and stimulation.

A core vision of SMMUSD focuses on closing the achievement gap between students, through modernization and the provision of technology that transforms the education landscape. Acknowledging there is a growing demand for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), SMMUSD wanted to take steps to ensure its schools had the tools required today to prepare both current and future students to be college and career ready.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

To bring these necessary technologies to both teachers and students, SMMUSD's IT department has been transforming the district's infrastructure. In the past, non-centralized systems spread across 17 sites, resulting in a litany of challenges for its limited staff.

> "Over the past four or five years, our need to tie into the growing demands of the learning experience meant we had to step it up."
>
> **John Castillo**, Senior Network Engineer, SMMUSD

Rapid technology advancements and the corresponding expectations of students, parents, and teachers created several challenges for the district's IT department:

1. Updating current district-wide wired and wireless footprints was a great start but didn't cover the entire scope of what they wanted to achieve.

2. SMMUSD was having trouble meeting some or all of the requirements to implement new software or programs when suggested by school officials.

3. IT staff wanted their infrastructure to be as efficient as possible, with the ability to maintain their systems utilizing a small team without sacrificing their computing or storage resources.

SMMUSD wanted to further their use of technology within their schools and classrooms while making it simpler for their IT staff to manage the systems within their architecture. They turned to Meridian IT for help.

Meridian IT understands the needs of vertical based IT environments based on the experience and expertise of our team. We specialize in fluent modern IT, helping our clients in the education vertical translate unique opportunities to enhance their agility and functionality. Over two-thirds of our staff is made up of vendor certified specialists with expertise in IT infrastructure, security & privacy, managed services, mobility, unified communications, social business, and equipment leasing.

SMMUSD sat down with Anthony Schubert, Director of Sales at Meridian IT. Anthony was able to identify the district's needs and suggested the use of VMware virtualization software.

- **vSphere with Operations Management:** SMMUSD's IT department is now able to utilize the intelligence

> "We've come a long way with our computing environment. One of the biggest changes was implementing VMware. Now every class has wireless, the infrastructure to support it, and we have the bandwidth capacity to provide centralized systems at our district office that supply all our sites. We have superior performance and we can say 'yes' to all new requests."
>
> **John Castillo**
> Senior Network Engineer, SMMUSD

operations management system of vSphere, giving them better insights, improved performance, and availability across their infrastructure.

- **vCenter Server:** SMMUSD now also has a second instance of a vCenter server, creating another centralized platform to manage their vSphere environments. This allows them to automate their virtual infrastructure to deliver insights and results with confidence.

- **Site Recovery Manager Disaster Recovery:** To ensure their data and information stay safe, Anthony suggested the addition of VMware Site Recovery Manager, which covers up to 75 virtual machines for mission critical services. This allows for VMs to be readily available in the event of a failover scenario.

- **VMware Horizon View:** Serving kiosks, labs, and remote staff workers, Meridian IT helped to implement Horizon View for 350 users. SMMUSD can now deliver a consistent user experience utilizing different devices and locations, with optimization for their data center.

By working with SMMUSD, we were able to make recommendations and bring about big ideas on how they could utilize and expand their current infrastructure. We were able to empower their IT department to choose the right solution that meets their district needs, resulting in new ideas on different partners and vendors. SMMUSD not only faced the issue of managing and delivering technology within its current environment, but also providing an infrastructure that could grow and expand as the ed-tech industry evolves.

BRINGING TECHNOLOGY TO THE CLASSROOM

Thanks to their VMware software, SMMUSD can now implement their ideas for furthering technology within the district. Meridian IT understood the role technology played within the district and what their outcome wanted to be. With this in mind, both Meridian IT and SMMUSD were able to work within their current infrastructure, quickly integrating VMware accordingly.

- **VMware:** Senior Network Engineer, John Castillo was familiar with the products and services of VMware, having used it in the past. The solution recommended by Anthony was able to meet their requirements best, allowing for multi-vendor device support, such as V-Motion and Storage Motion.

- **Full Featured Software:** The use of VMware means John and his staff can make significant changes without being burdened or challenged to do so. This has allowed the staff to have better management control, tightening their maintenance to be more agile, simple, and elegant.

- **Ease of Integration:** Integrating VMware into their current Nutanix architecture was simple and easy.

- **Big Opportunities with an Established Vendor:** Using the established reputation of VMware, SMMUSD can now focus on centralizing and improving efficiency within both the IT department and the district. This gives its small team the opportunity to deliver large technology and management capabilities.

> "We've moved on from just maintaining our systems to now offering services and capabilities that people may have not even been aware of."
>
> **John Castillo**, Senior Network Engineer, SMMUSD

> "Doing business with Meridian IT doesn't mean we're locked into products and services from just one company. They've been fantastic about bringing in different partners to demo multiple solutions. Seeing these options gave us the confidence that we're making the right decisions."
>
> **John Castillo**
> Senior Network Engineer, SMMUSD

TRANSFORMING THE CLASSROOM OF THE FUTURE

Now with a solid foundation, John and the IT team are focused on making the classrooms more aware of what they can do and how to do things more easily. They are empowered to continue transforming their schools' classrooms for technology, while also considering further improvements and additions, like disaster recovery and redundancies, implementation of BYOD (bring your own device) and things like in-house YouTube.

Anthony and his sales team at Meridian IT were not only able to extend the current infrastructure of SMMUSD, but also opened up doors to various solution types that can help further their goals. Meridian IT's expertise, proven processes, and collaboration have allowed us to become better positioned to help our clients solve complex business challenges with proactive roadmaps to build a foundation of success.

About Meridian IT

Meridian IT is a member of Meridian Group International, operating worldwide. Focusing on our core competencies: cloud services, data center, security and risk management, and unified workspace, we provide flexible IT solutions with leading vendors, managed services, deployment options, ongoing maintenance and global support. As part of a group that offers equipment leasing, clients leverage our comprehensive portfolio, capabilities, and industry insights to support their business initiatives and growth. Learn more at www.meridianitinc.com or www.onlinemeridian.com.

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