



CASE STUDY: INDIANA TECH

At a Glance

Customer: Indiana Tech University

Industry: Education

Location: Fort Wayne, Indiana

About The Customer:

- Growing college with over 4,000 students
- Offers over two dozen disciplines
- Newly launched online virtual classroom
- Enrolls both traditional and professional studies students

Business Challenge:

- Substantial growth of the online lecture software use
- Limited capital operating budget
- Needed decentralization of their Active Directory server and Blackboard online software
- Services must be highly available
- Reduced hardware management and maintenance time

Cloud Solution:

- Implemented US Signal's Cloud Hosting Services which allowed for easy high-speed access to remote clients
- Built a larger production environment to allow for continued study body growth
- Simplified the network topology

Business Results:

- Secure and reliable Cloud Hosting Solution that is fully redundant allowing high availability for students and faculty
- Ease of expansion as their student enrollment grows
- Fulfillment of long-term IT goals
- Gain in efficiencies from streamlined billing and one point of contact

Business Challenge

Indiana Tech is a private, 4-year university offering associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Founded in 1930, the first graduating class was composed of thirteen engineers; enrollment has since grown to over 6,000 students. Early on, Indiana Tech was known for its engineering curriculum; today the university offers degrees in more than two dozen disciplines including computer science, education, business, and a newly established law school.

As the university has grown, so has their academic approach as degree programs are offered in multiple formats. Traditional on-campus classes meet for 15-week semesters and are usually populated with young adults fresh out of high school. The accelerated program, through the College of Professional Studies, has five and six week programs that meet evenings or weekends once a week. These students are usually fully employed and seeking education to advance in their chosen field or to change careers.

Finally, there are online degree programs utilizing the Blackboard Learning Systems educational software. While all faculty are asked to utilize Blackboard as a means to distribute their syllabus and communicate office hours, it is the online degree programs that raised the bar for availability. These classes are also accelerated and students need the ability to access them 24/7/365 from any location that offers Internet service - this program was the driver to investigate cloud services.

Jeff Leichty is Indiana Tech's director of information technology and manages a team of six in the management of hardware, software, and technical services across the university. Jeff and his staff are committed to providing the most complete, efficient, and accessible online learning environment possible. Their focus needs to be on the seamless interaction of educational materials and students rather than on the inevitable issues related to maintaining a data center. In the long term, Jeff does not want his staff to be "hardware jockeys."

Cloud Solution

During the planning phase, the IT department anticipated substantial growth in participation in the online courses. What they could not predict at the program's launch was the peak demand periods when usage would spike. They knew uptime was critical as students needed the ability to access the courses on their schedule. The server had to be available always, as any outage could affect a student's ability to complete the accelerated course in the truncated timeframe. In addition, student access could not be constrained by geography. They desired the suite of online courses to be a stand-alone application with separate bandwidth from their existing network. Infrastructure continuity and redundancy would be key factors necessary for success.

Indiana Tech did not want to spend the capital to expand their data center to accommodate the capacity and continuity these requirements demanded. Also, the IT department's long-term strategy was to have resources in place to extend their internal data center for business continuity and disaster planning. These variables pointed toward cloud services as the delivery vehicle for the online program.

Indiana Tech evaluated EarthLink cloud services as well as Blackboard's hosting platform. Indiana Tech has had US Signal Virtual Ethernet and other services for the past several years. During this time the university has found the US Signal sales and engineering teams as well as the Network Operations Center (NOC) to be responsive and easy to engage when needed. US Signal engineers visited the campus and talked to Jeff and his team. They made sure they understood the issues and gave each one their full attention.

Business Results

As part of their long-term strategy, the IT department has put their Active Directory server into the cloud and, over time, will move additional services into this off-premise virtual environment based on business continuity requirements. US Signal's Cloud Hosting services provide the elasticity to meet the ebb and flow of capacity needs for these efforts. Further, US Signal personnel are responsible for the maintenance and security of the infrastructure as well as the power and cooling costs associated with running a data center. More of the college's capital is available for academic related purposes, and its IT department can focus on developing and integrating applications and systems.

Indiana Tech's IT department is confident that using US Signal's Cloud Hosting services will enable them to keep up with the demands of the university's continuously expanding online community and capacity for continuity efforts. Indiana Tech appreciates US Signal's hands-on approach it provides them with unique insight into the university's technical issues. US Signal's ability to respond quickly and effectively helps support Indiana Tech's core mission: To provide learners of all ages with career-focused professional education.

About US Signal

US Signal is a leading IT solutions provider, offering connectivity, cloud hosting, colocation, data protection, and disaster recovery services — all powered by its wholly owned and operated, robust fiber network. US Signal also helps customers optimize their IT resources through the provision of managed and professional services.



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