AvePoint®
Your SharePoint. Our Innovation.

Kingston University London

Customer Location
London, England

Industry
Education

Platform
Microsoft SharePoint 2010

Critical Needs
• An expedited migration from SharePoint 2003 to SharePoint 2010 without migrating to SharePoint 2007
• Granular backup of critical data on a scheduled basis according to organisational needs
• Easy reorganisation of SharePoint content

AvePoint Solutions
DocAve Migrator
DocAve Backup and Restore
DocAve Content Manager

"AvePoint has demonstrated the ability to take away the complexity of SharePoint 2010, allowing us to shift the focus from technical to content management, which has been a huge benefit for us."

- Dena Lawson – SharePoint Project Manager, Kingston University

Case Study:
Kingston University Reduces Migration from SharePoint 2003 Directly to SharePoint 2010 by 30% with DocAve®

Success Highlights
• Direct migration from SharePoint 2003 to SharePoint 2010, saving two months
• Saved £20,000 in additional hardware and software by negating the need to migrate to SharePoint 2007 as Microsoft native tools require
• Performed granular backups of important data in SharePoint environment on a scheduled basis according to organisational needs

Customer Profile

Located in London, Kingston University offers a real-world education in an innovative and supportive environment. Kingston's mission is to: promote participation in higher education, which it regards as a democratic entitlement; strive for excellence in learning, teaching, and research; realise the creative potential and fire the imagination of all its members; and equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy. Kingston currently has more than 25,000 students, 2,000 employees, and 7,000 networked computers.

The Challenge

Higher education in the digital age requires both students and staff to maintain close connection with their university beyond the classroom. Kingston University implemented Microsoft SharePoint 2003 to provide a single point of access for information important to both students and staff. The platform was adopted quickly and became a vital part of the institution, currently holding more than one terabyte of data. Kingston's server farm consists of two web front ends, one SQL server, one index server, and one application server.

Students use the SharePoint platform as a student intranet which provides information on University life while also acting as a gateway to key systems and services available on and off campus. This "StudentSpace" communicates to the entire student community and provides a wide range of information from current news and events in the local area, to helping students with their studies by providing access to past exam papers and e-resources.

Staff and external collaborative partners use SharePoint under the "StaffSpace" banner for document management, communication, and collaboration. Important documents on human resources, university policy, staff guidance, and legal information are all accessed from this one convenient location. Faculties and departments also use StaffSpace to publish information available for all staff, and restricted workspaces enable collaborative working within their own departmental area.

As well as relying on SharePoint for Student and Staff portals, Kingston also uses the platform for its admissions process. The university receives approximately 40,000 applications every year and accepts 7,000 new students. All applications are stored and managed in SharePoint and each application is ultimately accepted or rejected and sorted using the platform.

Due to frequent use of the platform, Kingston administrators knew the institution would benefit greatly from upgrading to SharePoint 2010. The new version offered social computing functions that would be especially useful to students, allowing better connection through enhanced features such as blogs, wikis, communities, discussion boards, and tagging. Given the ever-increasing use of smartphones by both students and faculty, SharePoint 2010's mobile integration was also of great appeal. "Since the introduction of tuition fees, students are increasingly demanding greater levels of service," said Dena Lawson, SharePoint Project Manager at Kingston University. "We knew the new features offered by SharePoint 2010 would significantly improve the students' experience."

Upgrading directly to SharePoint 2010 from SharePoint 2003 is not possible with Microsoft native tools. In order to upgrade natively to SharePoint 2010, Kingston administrators would have needed to upgrade to SharePoint 2007 first, and then perform a subsequent upgrade to SharePoint 2010. This would have required additional hardware and software and would also have required Kingston to hire additional consultants to carry out the task. Since the native migration process would have been far too time-consuming and resource-intensive, Kingston administrators sought a third-party solution for the job. "After making the decision to migrate to SharePoint 2010, we were aware that we needed an infrastructure management solution which would minimise resourcing requirements at the back-end, while also ensuring that service levels were kept high, particularly during important times in the academic year such as exam periods and admissions," Lawson said.

The AvePoint Solution

Administrators investigated several third-party solutions and ultimately chose AvePoint's DocAve Software Platform. DocAve integrates more than 30 independently deployable modules which function within a unified, browser-based interface and fully distributed architecture, but can also be purchased and deployed independently. In addition to the SharePoint migration tool they required, administrators were impressed by the full suite of modules offered through DocAve. "We tested a trial version of DocAve and found it worked immediately out of the box," Lawson said. "The platform interacted well with other software in the university's environment and was very user-friendly."

Using DocAve Migrator for SharePoint, administrators were able to carry out a successful proof of concept upgrade from SharePoint 2003 to SharePoint 2010, which enabled staff at Kingston to identify a best practice approach, while also reducing the total migration time by two months through bypassing SharePoint 2007. Information critical to the business from the previous version of SharePoint was kept intact, assuring users that no data was lost during the transfer. All folder structures, document properties, and associated metadata, as well as permissions and access control, were retained with full-fidelity, giving IT staff at Kingston confidence that

DocAve would be able to simplify and support the full scale SharePoint 2010 migration.

By the time the proof of concept was finished, Kingston identified significant savings with DocAve. First, the university did not need to purchase additional hardware and software which would have been required to support SharePoint 2007 had an incremental migration been required. Administrators estimate that this alone saved the university approximately £20,000. Additionally, Kingston's staffing situation would have required the university to increase its use of external consultants to support any migration project. DocAve's ability to automate much of the migration process removed this need.

Kingston administrators soon began to explore other solutions available through DocAve. Unique granular backup scheduling by DocAve Backup and Restore for SharePoint enabled administrators to run backup processes according to specific business needs and organisational timetables. The University saw this to the especially valuable during admissions and exam periods, when backup can be set to run every two hours on specific sites to protect some of the university's most critical and valuable data. DocAve Content Manager also allowed administrators to easily and accurately reorganise SharePoint content and combine different sites versions into one from a single, web-based browser while maintaining all content, configuration, security, and metadata.

The Bottom Line

Kingston administrators knew the University could benefit greatly from upgrading to SharePoint 2010. However, SharePoint's native tools placed some significant challenges in their path, namely the requirement to upgrade to SharePoint 2007 before upgrading to SharePoint 2010. With AvePoint's DocAve Migrator, administrators have been able to skip this costly and time-consuming step entirely, and now have the ability to seamlessly migrate large volumes of data, saving significant time and resources.

From the beginning of its proof of concept experience with DocAve, Kingston's administrators found AvePoint's live global technical support to be extremely helpful. "AvePoint's support team has provided an excellent level of service, always responding quickly and providing technical solutions whenever it was necessary for us," Lawson said.

DocAve offered a host of additional ways to enhance, organise, and protect Kingston's SharePoint deployment. "As we move forward with the full scale migration to SharePoint 2010, we plan to utilise more and more of DocAve's functions," Lawson said. "AvePoint has demonstrated the ability to take away the complexity of SharePoint 2010, allowing us to shift the focus from technical to content management, which has been a huge benefit for us."

About AvePoint

AvePoint is a global technology company and proven software leader. Since its founding in 2001, AvePoint is one of the world's largest providers of enterprise-class governance solutions for Microsoft SharePoint. Propelled by one of the world's largest SharePoint-exclusive research & development teams, AvePoint helps more than 8,000 customers – including many Fortune 500 companies and government agencies – meet their specific business objectives utilizing the SharePoint platform. AvePoint, Inc. is headquartered and maintains its principle engineering centre in Jersey City, NJ, with wholly owned sales and engineering centres in the USA, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and China. AvePoint is a Depth Managed Microsoft Gold Certified Portals and Collaboration Partner and Gold Certified ISV Partner as well as a US Government GSA provider via strategic partnerships.

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