## TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**CASE STUDY**

# Extending Life, Reducing Costs of Data Center Storage Assets

Dustin Jordan, Assistant Director of Technology Operations and Systems Management (TOSM) at the Texas Tech University System (TTUS), was faced with a dilemma. His relationship with Dell Inc., the OEM, was solid and the warranty maintenance for the servers and storage in his data centers were more than satisfactory.

However, support for his legacy server, storage and data center infrastructure assets were more difficult to obtain. His datacenter is 350 miles from the nearest metropolitan area, and third-party service providers he had talked to could not supply both the cost-effectiveness and flexibility that he needed. To avoid replacing expensive devices prematurely, he needed extraordinary maintenance and support.

Texas Tech is a major comprehensive research university and medical institution that provides higher education to liberal arts, technical and medical students in several locations across Texas. Mr. Jordan's group of 14 full-time IT staff members supports hardware hosting and facilities management for servers and storage devices for the TTU system and its institutions.

TOSM's responsibilities include server and storage hosting, server management local and remote server backups and database hosting and management. His group is also responsible for hosting the ERP system shared by Texas Tech University and the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, which includes the student, finance, financial aid and human resource systems for those institutions.

## Extend Hardware Lifecycle

Mr. Jordan's role at Texas Tech grew with his department, which transformed from a mainframe support group managing a mainframe and 4 servers 10 years ago to today's distributed computing system of more than 600 servers and more than 650TB of storage. The Texas Tech University System operates this hardware from one main data center on the Lubbock campus and leverages a smaller data center used for disaster recovery about 10 miles away.

Dell, the provider of their co-branded fiber-channel SAN devices, claimed that at 5 years old, the university's storage equipment was at the end of its supportable life. Mr. Jordan disagreed, estimating it had 2 or 3 more years of life. He knew keeping the SANs in service and avoiding the cost of replacing these assets would require cost-effective, flexible and responsive support.

In what Mr. Jordan described as perfect timing, a call from Park Place started a relationship that provided just the services that the university required. These services enabled Mr. Jordan's department to reduce storage maintenance costs while meeting their needs for support responsiveness.

> " We operated an expensive storage infrastructure that had a longerlife than manufacturers were willing to support. Park Place helped us avoid pushing our SANs out the door at the end of 5 years. "

**Dustin Jordan**
Assistant Director of Technology Operations and System Management
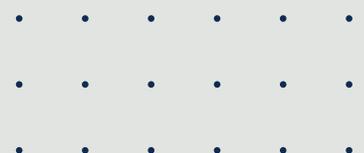
## CASE STUDY KEY POINTS

**Texas Tech retains control of equipment lifecycle**

**Provided an alternative for end of service life equipment**

**Reduced storage maintenance costs**

## Reduce Storage-related Maintenance Costs

By storing and monitoring the inventory of spare server, SAN and tape library parts onsite, Park Place enabled the IT group with the ability to address issues immediately as opposed to waiting for parts to be shipped and/or delivered from other locations. Compared to costs of the previous third-party service provider, the resulting savings of maintenance costs were up to 50% less for specific devices.

## Defer Costly Capital Expidenture

The IT group's post-warranty agreement with Park Place enabled the IT group to extend the useful life of its storage assets and depreciate related costs over 2 or 3 more years than was previously possible. This delayed the need to incur infrastructure replacement costs of close to $300,000.

## Ensure IT Support Responsiveness

Because university operations required uninterrupted services, the university's location made third-party maintenance and support a concern to Mr. Jordan and the IT group. Other third-party services, which required offsite parts storage, were located in larger cities more than 300 miles away. These distances would result in 3-to-12 hour response times for parts that weren't stocked in the local parts depot.

Mr. Jordan was pleased to learn that Park Place would store spare parts at their facility, which eliminated lengthy response times. On the rare occasions when the IT group needed a specialized part that was not in local inventory, a Park Place engineer would fly or drive the part to the university for delivery.

## Incorporate Third-Party Maintenance Into Support

The ability to provide just the right amount and types of support throughout the SAN lifecycle was another valuable benefit of Park Place services.

A Dell Platinum agreement ensured that Dell engineers provided the Level I and Level II support even after the OEM hardware warranties expire. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Hoftyzer, Park Place's Key Account Manager, worked together to design a flexible, customized agreement that suited specific Texas Tech requirements. Under the new agreement, troubleshooting duties would be assumed by the OEM and/or Park Place. Park Place services filled in the gaps, replacing failed parts quickly and providing qualified personnel for parts replacement when necessary.

## Build a Relationship with a Vendor They Can Trust

Park Place Technologies' account executive has also become a trusted advisor of the IT department. "Our Park Place Technologies account executive and I have a had a good working relationship. It's good to know that I can ask for an opinion and trust the answer to be impartial. I like to be loyal, and I like it when our account exec can be the same with us. I looked forward to building a good relationship with Park Place, and I think we achieved that."

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