



# Onslow College

Onslow College wanted to extend and enhance its IT offerings, both for students and for school administration services. By selecting SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server with Xen\* virtualisation technology, the school was able to increase the flexibility and performance of its server environment while decreasing the costs of acquisition and ownership.

### Overview

Onslow College is a co-educational state secondary school with 1,150 pupils in Wellington, New Zealand. Established in 1956, Onslow College is an active participant in local community life, offering high-quality education in a co-operative, friendly, stimulating and well-disciplined environment.

### Challenge

The budget for refreshing server hardware at Onslow College was strictly limited, and the school decided to look into virtualisation as a means of extending its purchasing power. By combining multiple virtual machines on each physical server, the school expected to make significant cost savings, both in terms of the initial hardware acquisition and in terms of running costs.

The school wanted to gradually phase out several older servers while introducing four new ones, and introducing virtualisation would enable it to minimise the number of physical machines it needed to purchase.

The challenge was to find a virtualisation solution capable of delivering not only high flexibility, scalability and performance, but also easy management—all at a cost-effective price. An additional factor was recoverability—Onslow College wanted the

ability to deploy new virtual servers easily, as a way to ensure rapid disaster recovery.

### Solution

After considering VMware\* virtualisation, Onslow College selected the Xen virtualisation technology built into SUSE Linux Enterprise Server as the best solution for its requirements.

“Xen virtualisation in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server gave us the scalability and flexibility we were looking for, without the cost of a proprietary solution like VMware,” said Tom Cummings, Director, Cummings & Partners, who also teaches at Onslow College and runs the school’s network. “We saw the Xen technology at a Novell BrainShare® event, and realised that it would enable us to virtualise our server landscape at a fraction of the expected cost.”

Cummings & Partners worked with Crypt Consulting to deploy SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, and to migrate Onslow College’s existing Novell® Open Enterprise Server environments to Xen virtual servers. The joint team also installed and configured a Microsoft\* Windows\* Server 2003 virtual machine to run on Xen on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The new virtualised environment runs on IBM\* BladeCenter\* hardware.

### Onslow College at a glance:

*New Zealand co-educational secondary school with 1,150 pupils*

#### ■ Industry:

Education

#### ■ Location:

New Zealand

#### ■ Products and Services:

Novell Open Enterprise Server  
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server with built-in Xen virtualisation

#### ■ Results:

- *Created rapid test and development environment for new virtual servers*
- *Accelerated disaster recovery from hours to minutes*
- *Gained a stable, high-performance platform for heterogeneous workloads*

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#### Tom Cummings

*Director  
Cummings & Partners Ltd*



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“We continue to run some legacy environments on stand-alone physical servers, but 95 percent of our server landscape—including Microsoft Windows Server 2003—is virtualised on Xen on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server,” said Cummings. “The solution was easy to roll out, and our users literally didn’t notice that we’d moved over to virtualised servers!”

The use of Xen virtualisation has enabled Onslow College to run three distinct operating systems on completely standardised hardware, managed using the same tools. In the unlikely event of a server failure, the school can simply restore the relevant virtual servers from stored images to a new blade.

“Disaster recovery is considerably faster and easier in a virtualised environment,” said Cummings. “In the past, a hardware failure meant having to rebuild the server, because it was effectively tied to the physical box. Now, we can simply fire up a new blade and restart the virtual servers almost instantly.”

## Results

Moving to Xen virtual servers on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has enabled Onslow College to maximise the value of its current and future investment in server hardware. The ability to run multiple virtual machines side-by-side on the same physical server means that the school will require new hardware less frequently, which will also push

down the electricity and cooling costs in its server room.

“The school had already budgeted for the server upgrade before we deployed Xen virtualisation, and it enabled us to make the budget go much further,” said Cummings. “A second blade server is about to come online, and without Xen virtualisation we might have needed five or six additional servers to handle the same workload. We also expect to retire our non-blade servers by moving their workload to virtual servers, which will enable us to further reduce our electricity bill.”

The use of Xen virtualisation on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server enables Onslow College to run its heterogeneous server landscape in mixed environments on the same physical hardware, simplifying management and eliminating the need to buy different hardware for different operating systems.

“We need the flexibility to run different operating systems, and Xen virtualisation on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server gives us a stable, high-performance environment for doing just that,” said Cummings. “We have created a SUSE Linux Enterprise Server environment for building and testing Xen virtual machines, which we can then seamlessly deploy into production on the BladeCenter—this has turned out to be an enormous cost saver both in time and money.”



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