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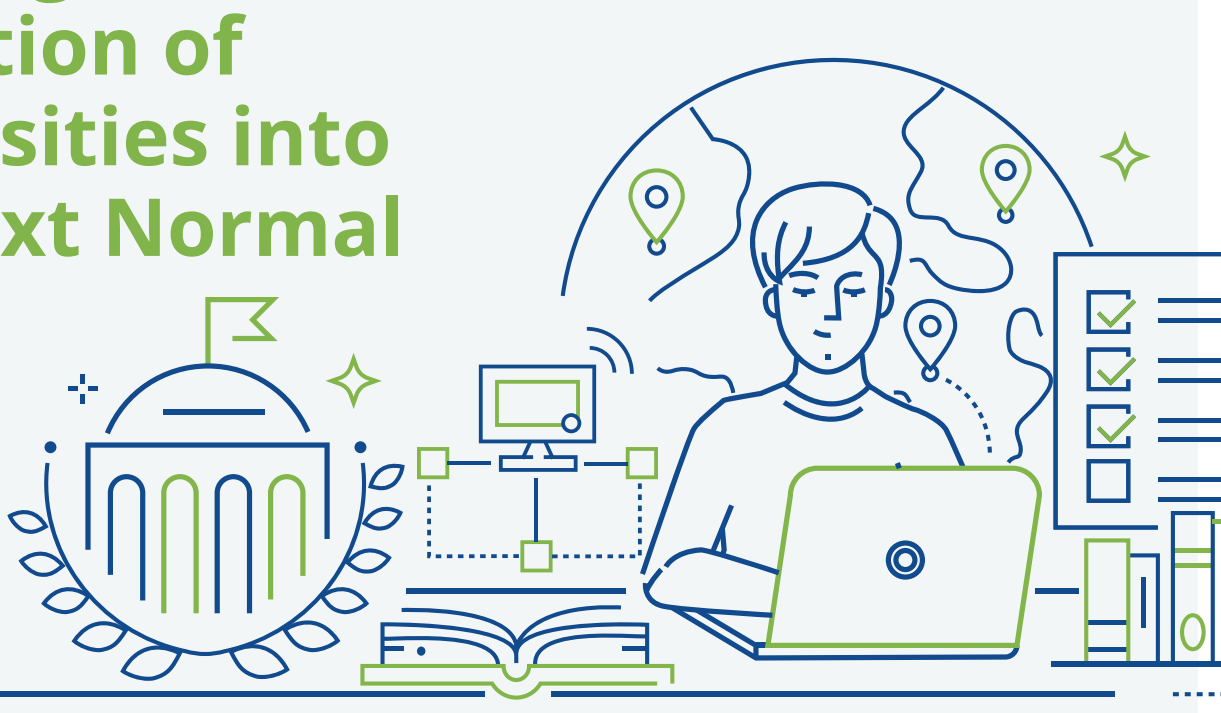
IT Infrastructure Enabling Successful Transition of Universities into the Next Normal



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SEQUENCE 1

UNIVERSITIES FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES IN NEAR-TERM OPERATIONS

Universities need to address some key challenges in the next normal:

- Economic challenges
- Operational (return to campus) challenges
- Student experience challenges

Only **16%** of European universities feel they are already **emerging from the crisis**. The rest are still struggling with business continuity or the financial impact of the crisis.

There is a high degree of uncertainty, with **15%** of universities struggling to **assess the impact of the crisis** on IT spending and more than **30%** already determined to cut spending.

Source: IDC EMEA, COVID-19 Impact Survey, Waves 13–15, October 20–December 14, 2020

SEQUENCE 2

NATURE OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY HAS CHANGED PROFOUNDLY

Business continuity is now dependent on IT. Networking capabilities are key to improving business continuity. Key features include:

- **Intelligence** to provide real-time awareness and mitigation of threats
- **Automation** to ease the workload
- **Software-defined management and deployment** options
- **Custom applications** (APIs) leveraging new data in the cloud

AI is vital for networking and its impact on business continuity, together with cloud.

AI:
AI can shorten reaction times to user queries, significantly improving user experience.

Cloud:
Cloud, especially SaaS, is crucial to transform current or near-term operations, with accessible student-facing solutions at the core of the transformation.

To move to cloud, IT networking strategies should be aligned to account for the need for additional bandwidth.

Source: IDC's 2020 WW Industry CloudPath Survey (Western Europe, retail n = 40); IDC AI Global Survey, 2019 (Western Europe, retail n = 52)

SEQUENCE 3

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE-SUPPORTED CONSIDERATIONS TO PROPEL YOUR UNIVERSITY TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL NEXT NORMAL

Next-generation architecture capable of providing custom applications

Location analytics and intelligence

- To avoid quarantining people without good cause, universities need to ensure that they can trace the whereabouts of people moving around campus, determining if they have been in contact with anyone who is COVID-positive. Geolocation capabilities are needed to establish location accountability.
- The universities need to make sure that people on campus are sufficiently dispersed to prevent larger gatherings and to optimise lecture schedules to minimise risk. Asset positioning, coupled with geolocation, is key to implementing this use case.

Hybrid learning enablement

While most students will return to campus, those unable or unwilling to do so still need access to all education-related content. Universities need to provide a seamless transition between online and offline experience for these students.

Student health and well-being

The mental health crisis is not getting any better, and students are more likely to experience anxiety and other mental health issues. Location data can help, flagging students who are struggling and enabling university counsellors to reach out in a timely manner.

SEQUENCE 4

IDC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES LOOKING TO IMPROVE THEIR STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN THE NEXT NORMAL

1. Find out which use cases are key for a successful transition to the next normal, and what role IT infrastructure plays in implementation.
2. Identify the features that your IT infrastructure needs to ensure business continuity and lower operational costs.
3. Draft a plan on how to adopt a modern IT infrastructure, with AI-enabled networking at the centre as a key enabler for all innovative use cases.
4. Gain agility by leveraging cloud architectures to reduce operational costs and simplify the onboarding of new services and applications.
5. Security must be evident at all points of the network, incorporating a zero-trust model.
6. Next-generation automated datacentre fabric, simplifying processes and operations.