

CASE STUDY

Southern New Hampshire University Selects Higher Digital for Modernization Initiative

Institution Accelerates Digital Transformation and
Creates Foundational Change in Integration Services



Southern
New Hampshire
University

THE SUCCESS STORY:

Growth and Digital Transformation (Dx)

SNHU is one of the fastest growing universities in the nation. About 3,500 students attend classes on its 300-acre campus in Manchester, NH, with another 90,000 students engaged in the school's extensive online learning program. SNHU also boasts an alumni network of more than 100,000 people.

SNHU needed to leverage a robust IT network to support these users. SNHU's IT team sought to migrate its legacy technologies to an array of cloud-based applications, all of which needed to work together. The team also needed to build better communication and transparency with SNHU's executives to align IT development with the university's goals.

Dx STARTS WITH...Creating an integrated ecosystem to better support SNHU's growing programs

SNHU's IT staff began the university's Dx by modernizing the school's on-premise technology stack. This complex effort involved migrating a number of technologies to cloud-based systems and ensuring they were properly integrated.

This was no small task, according to Toby Carroll, SNHU's Director of Development and Integration. "We needed to essentially create an ecosystem of APIs to support a number of pilot programs the school was beginning to implement," said Carroll.

Those programs included new competency-based and micro credentialing programs, as well as refugee education and foreign language programs. "We have customer relationship management tools, learning management systems, and more, all from different vendors. We needed all of these applications to speak to each other."

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CUSTOMER

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU)

CHALLENGES

SNHU needed to integrate the disparate components of a newly modernized IT stack while better aligning IT and executive leadership to meet the needs of the university's rapidly expanding curriculum.

RESULTS



Higher Digital designed and deployed a completely integrated ecosystem of cloud-based services.



The Higher Digital team instituted a new agile process that creates better transparency between IT and executive leadership functional business units and ensures that development is in line with the university's top priorities.

"The results we have seen from working with Higher Digital have been nothing short of excellent. We're experiencing a growth in capacity month-over-month. We have the same amount of people, so they're able to be more productive, and our integration efforts have resulted in a set of shared services that we've been able to productize. All-in-all, we're very pleased with the results we've experienced."

Toby Carroll

Director of Development and Integration
Southern New Hampshire University

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Carroll's cross-functional team consists of developers, QA, and application operations, but like many university IT teams, they were pressed for time and deployed on day-to-day tasks. Carroll needed an outside API architect that could lead the development of the integrated platform. He chose Higher Digital, as its capabilities were a bullseye given its integration expertise and familiarity with the cloud services that SNHU was now using.

"Higher Digital had a deep understanding of these services and how they all worked together," Carroll explained. "Many companies are only able to solve one piece of the integration puzzle, but Higher Digital was able to bring all of the pieces together in a way that clicked."

Working together, Higher Digital and SNHU's IT team created the university's "Enterprise Service Bus"—SNHU's own platform of shared services. "We have taken the concept of integrations and turned it into our own software product," said Carroll. "We couldn't have done that without Higher Digital's consultation and guidance."

Higher Digital continues with aligning IT and university executives to better meet SNHU's priorities

As with most higher education institutions, SNHU's cloud services ecosystem wasn't the only thing that needed to be more tightly integrated. SNHU's IT team wanted to close the procedural and organizational gaps that existed between them and the university's executives.

"As we became engaged with larger projects, we struggled to develop a transparent organizational system to help executives understand what we were doing," said Carroll. "We also needed a better way to align our work with the executives' goals and priorities."

SNHU adopted Higher Digital's Simplified Enterprise Agile™ framework, also known as (SEA)change. With (SEA)change, Higher Digital provides organizations with the training, coaching, and team optimization necessary to implement a true and effective digital transformation program. Higher Digital leverages existing processes and administrative tools to make the transformation as efficient as possible, and tailors its approach to resonate with even the most skeptical members of a leadership team. The focus is on delivering measurable results that resonate with executives and drive progress in KPIs.

Within 90 days, Higher Digital leveraged (SEA)change to develop an agile process that closed the communication gaps and brought development, QA, operations, and SNHU leadership closer together. Two scrum teams were established — one focused on building out the IT architecture, the other dedicated to facilitating the use of cloud services for projects across the organization.



Bringing clarity on an on-going basis

Post-engagement, one day a month is set aside for stakeholders to come together and plan the next two sprints. "We take this time to plan, reevaluate priorities, and map our efforts to organizational goals," explained Carroll. "It gives us a chance to prioritize our work so it's in line with leadership's objectives. Our team is now empowered to make its own design decisions, and we're working more closely with university executives. Everyone has an amazing amount of clarity about what we're doing, and why."

Modernizing technology and processes

Higher Digital has helped SNHU's IT team address both technical and procedural modernization challenges. The company's expertise has helped SNHU develop a well integrated ecosystem of cloud-based services. At the same time, it has created a system that has led to a tighter integration of IT and management.

Carroll and his team were so satisfied with their experience working with Higher Digital that they are now looking at other projects where they can build on their success together.

"Higher Digital has really knocked it out of the park," said Carroll. "The work that they've done has been incredibly valuable. They've taken these projects from concept to execution with very little direction in a short amount of time."

Carroll added, "Higher Digital was the pivot point for us. They provided the innovative thinking that got us to where we needed to be."



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