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CASE STUDY

Open Universities Australia shapes the future of learning by creating new ways to access education online

Avanade helps unlock opportunities for immediate innovation by upgrading the organization's Sitecore platform

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Business situation
Taking the next step on an ongoing digital journey

The current realities of remote working and digital collaboration have made the world of online education more relevant and important than ever. Open Universities Australia (OUA) provides access to thousands of distance courses from universities across Australia. As the country's leader in online higher education, the organization understands how important innovation is for giving students a modern, seamless experience.

To offer more personalized services, OUA previously partnered with Avanade to implement a new Sitecore platform. The solution powers experiences across multiple channels and helps students easily explore and select programs. It has led to significant growth in both applications and enrollment. When an upgrade to Sitecore 9 became available, OUA wanted to remain current to take advantage of new features – including an enhanced content management system (CMS) – that will help it launch new initiatives as part of its ongoing digital journey. For example, the solution could improve the catalogue search experience and increase personalization. However, the organization wanted an expert to lead the upgrade to prevent significant disruptions to business continuity across its services. Thanks to the trust that was built during the initial Sitecore implementation, OUA once again partnered with Avanade.

Solution
Simplifying a complex upgrade

Avanade began OUA's Sitecore upgrade with a discovery phase. Using an "off-to-the-side" approach – where work is done without impacting the user experience on the active public website – our experts built an implementation strategy for completing the project.

However, Australia was locked down by the COVID-19 pandemic immediately prior to the start of this process, forcing the work to be completed virtually. Due to these new challenges, OUA understandably questioned whether Avanade could still execute at speed. Using an agile delivery method, we proved that we could; the project

was completed without significant interruption. While this type of upgrade usually results in a content freeze on the existing Sitecore platform for up to a month, with our approach, OUA was able to start adding new features to the site within two days. This was accomplished with no user down time and no lost data.

"With the support from Avanade, we were able to deliver and deploy an upgraded version of Sitecore with minimal internal impact and no impact to our customers," says Siebert Lubbe, chief engineer at OUA.

Results
Unlocking future innovation

OUA's new Sitecore 9 platform provides a solid foundation that will help the organization unlock the rest of its technical roadmap going forward. "The upgrade has set us up to build new innovative experiences for students that will improve the way in which they explore, choose and enroll into OUA's study options," says Lubbe. Not only was the upgrade done without significantly impacting business continuity, it has also boosted the speed of the public website by nearly 35%. The success of this project showcases the resilience of the OUA and Avanade teams working together and is a testament to the strength of our relationship. When faced with unprecedented challenges, we were able to execute the work at the same speed and with the same quality as an onsite implementation. At a time when online education is more in demand than ever, OUA continues to use technology to shape the future of learning.

About Open Universities Australia

Open Universities Australia is the national leader in online higher education, offering students the ability to choose from over 2,100 subjects and more than 370 degree programs from 21 of Australia's leading universities. Operating for 27 years, Open Universities Australia enables access to quality higher education for everyone, from anywhere, regardless of previous study experience - enriching the lives of people, their families and their communities. To learn more, visit: www.open.edu.au.

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About Avanade
Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. We are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Avanade has 39,000 professionals in 25 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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