

Leading Virtual Reality company delivers customer solutions faster as set-up time is cut by 25 per cent with customised Dell workstations



- Clustering



"We save a lot of time by using Dell's Hardware Customisation service. Now it can take just 1.5 hours to get a workstation ready for a customer. In total, we save 15 minutes every hour working on new solutions."

Andrew Connell, Technical Director, Virtalis

Customer profile

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| Company: | Virtalis Limited Group |
| Industry: | Technology |
| Country: | United Kingdom and United States |
| Employees: | 30 |
| Website: | www.virtalis.com |

Business need

Virtalis wanted to improve performance and reliability with its visualisation solutions. It also wanted to speed delivery to customers and cut time spent customising units.

Solution

Virtalis uses clustered Dell™ Precision™ workstations, customised by Dell Services, to deliver solutions to customers faster.



Benefits

- Time spent customising workstations falls by approximately 25 per cent
- Deliveries often completed in less than a week
- Tailored solutions improve the customer experience
- Standards-based architecture simplifies deployment
- Intel Processors help guarantee interactive visualisations
- Long product lifecycles provide stability

For more than 20 years, Virtalis has pioneered the use of Virtual Reality technology in the UK and internationally. This experience has made Virtalis one of the world's leading advanced visualisation companies, and its consultancy and solutions are regularly used in universities and engineering firms around the world.

"We need to use NVIDIA graphics cards and we've found that they work best with Dell systems. Plus when we add the graphics cards, they work first time. This saves us time so we can deliver systems to customers faster."

Andrew Connell, Technical Director, Virtalis

Virtalis specialises in immersive visualisation. It recently developed solutions called the ActiveCube, a multi-sided cell, and the ActiveWall, a projection screen of varied specifications that allow the user to experience real-time, stereoscopic 3D images. This creates a realistic, virtual environment consisting of anything from micro-molecular particles to complex engineering machinery. Solutions such as the ActiveCube and the ActiveWall can make use of eye tracking, motion tracking, virtual touch and data glove technology to deliver not only an immersive experience, but an interactive one too.

Virtalis prides itself on creating a tailored solution for each customer it works with, but over the years the technology needed to create visualisation solutions for customers has considerably reduced in size, as Andrew Connell, Technical Director at Virtalis, explains: "To power our systems, we used large, complex Unix supercomputers that needed to be housed in separate server rooms. Today, we achieve greater results using single or clustered workstations that can be placed wherever the customer chooses."

Connell says: "We want to deliver the best technology to our customers, but we don't like to keep them waiting. We need a simpler, faster way to work and Dell supplies that."

Technology at work

Services

Hardware Customisation

Hardware

Dell™ Precision™ T3500/T5500/T7500 workstations with Intel® Xeon® Processors X5500

The right fit for Virtalis and its customers

Virtalis needed a versatile and reliable option for its customers. "When we first tested Dell's workstations, we saw they were a great fit for our business and the solutions our customers need," says Connell. Initially, Dell provided Virtalis with a number of test units to see how they'd work with the company's software and its visualisation systems. The versatility, reliability and performance of the workstations instantly made an impression. Connell says: "We can offer a more versatile solution with Dell workstations. They can stand upright or be racked, depending on what the customer needs, plus we've never had any problems with reliability or performance."

Time spent customising workstations falls by approximately 25 per cent

Hardware Customisation cuts hands-on time by 25 per cent



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Virtualis is driven by customer service and wants to tailor its systems as precisely as possible to customers' needs, such as in recent complex multi-channel projection systems at a UK university and a multi-head mounted display environment for training helicopter crews in search-and-rescue operations. This is where Dell's Hardware Customisation service makes a difference. On request, Dell will add extra hard drive space, install graphics cards and even put the Virtualis logo on the Dell™ Precision™ workstations.

Dell also offers Virtualis and its customers extended warranties and Dell ProSupport services when needed. This means that Virtualis' Systems Team spends less time adding hardware to the workstations and more time developing new solutions and processing customer orders faster. Connell says: "We save a lot of time by using Dell's Hardware Customisation service. This means we can get our systems out faster and use our time more effectively on development with the customer. Now it can take just 1.5 hours to get a workstation ready for a customer. In total, we save 15 minutes every hour working on new solutions."

Solutions get to customers faster because Dell often delivers in less than a week

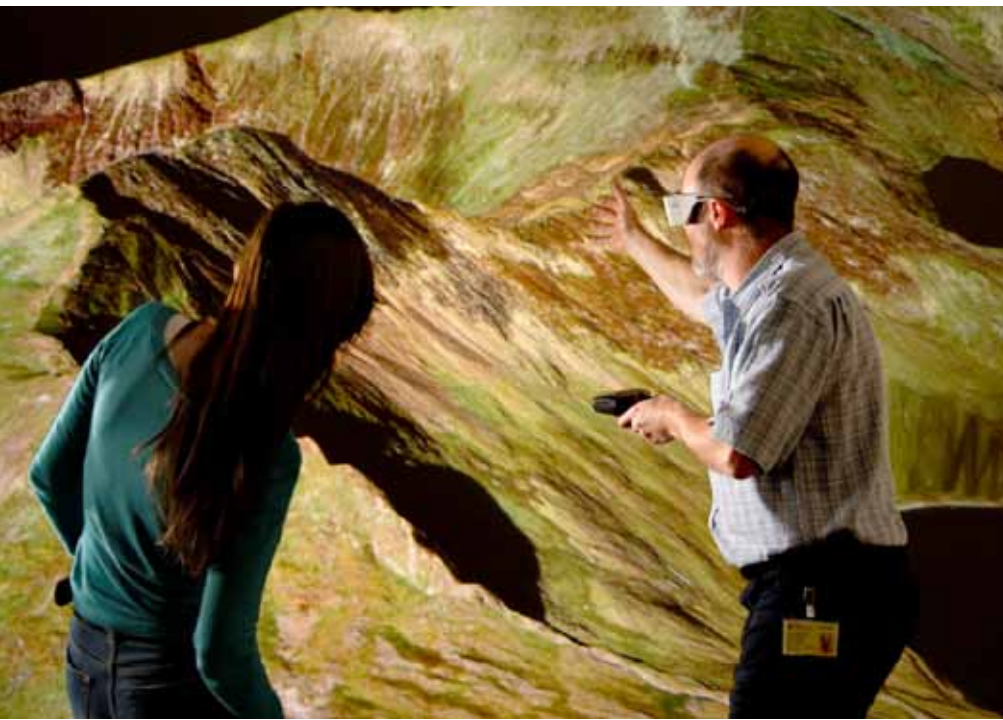
A key challenge for Virtualis is ensuring that its customers receive their solutions as quickly as possible. Connell finds that Dell regularly beats delivery estimates. Dell configures each system to order and has teams ready to customise workstations when Virtualis needs them. These time savings make a difference to Virtualis. Connell says: "We can turn around solutions for customers much faster because Dell delivers equipment quickly – often in less than a week. Dell brings increased efficiency to our supply chain."

Simpler deployment with standards-based architecture

Connell was also impressed by Dell's commitment to standards-based architecture. Virtualis' solutions demand high-performing graphics cards from NVIDIA®. Finding systems that worked seamlessly with these graphics cards has been difficult, but the open architecture of Dell Precision workstations eliminates this issue. Connell says: "We need to use NVIDIA graphics cards and we've found that they work best with Dell systems. Plus when we add the graphics cards, they work first time. This saves us time so we can deliver systems to customers faster."

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Performance guaranteed with Intel Processors

A typical high-end system that Virtalis creates may include four clustered workstations controlled by another workstation acting as the master unit. Virtalis tailors the systems it makes for each customer, but often uses Dell Precision T3500, T5500 and T7500 workstations with Intel® Xeon® Processors X5500. For Virtalis' demanding, high-intensity applications, using Intel Processors is important. Connell says: "We create scenarios that can respond in real time to users' actions. Intel Processors are very powerful and features such as Intel QuickPath give us great memory and flexibility with no lag or loss of performance."

Reliability for customers and long product lifecycles

Virtalis' customers need their visualisation solutions to last, so the long lifecycles associated with Dell Precision workstations – up to five years on some models – are important to Virtalis. In addition, with Dell workstations, there's no need for customers to update drivers manually as this is done automatically, even after Dell stops making that particular model. Connell says: "Dell continually releases new driver and BIOS updates, even for workstations that have come to the end of their lifecycles. Other manufacturers just don't offer that."

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