Ouachita Baptist University

Seamless Access to Existing File Systems

After looking at multiple file sync and share solutions, Ouachita Baptist University chose ownCloud to replace its VPN and Remote Desktop approach to file sharing. The pervasive use of tablets and smartphones led IT to look at options that would allow them to migrate from consumer-grade file sharing services to a more secure solution that could integrate with their Windows network drives. They delayed their technology decision until they could find something that truly met their needs.

> *"In the last six months, ownCloud has introduced new versions and we were really blown away with options, features, and ease of use — it all gelled for us.*
> *It was versatile, fast and efficient, and the ability to bring in Windows file shares was a huge deal."*
>
> Rob Crockett, Network Administrator, Ouachita Baptist University

About Ouachita Baptist University

As a leading liberal arts university, Ouachita has earned a strong academic reputation and year after year, is ranked among the nation's top colleges by such publications as U.S. News & World Report and Forbes. With traditional campus education as well as growing enrollment in Ouachita Online, educators are continuing to expand their educational outreach from this Arkansas-based university.

Challenges

Recognizing that BYOD was a trend that was here to stay, Ouachita wanted to provide a more secure means of accessing files and to ensure that they did not lose data. Previously, they had been using VPN and a remote desktop application for file access but this did not adequately accommodate the pervasive use of tablets and smartphones. In response, many users started to use personal Dropbox accounts which meant if users left, their data went with them – Ouachita was not able to retain a copy of files internally.

Why ownCloud?

After exploring cloud, hosted, and on-premise options, they found very few solutions that could integrate seamlessly with their Windows network drives where so much data was stored. This was also a format that was familiar to users. ownCloud offered the integration plus flexibility in mounting storage, providing a gateway to file systems they already had in place – there was no need to re-train users. *"ownCloud really fixed a hole for us by integrating with Windows file shares,"* said Crockett. IT didn't have to move storage and they could continue to use existing workflows allowing users to collaborate whether on-campus or on-the-go. Further, IT could use the Activity Stream, if needed, to understand how files were being shared. Before making a decision, they looked at Dropbox but it did not have the ability to integrate Windows network drives, and it was very expensive—even at the discounted pricing given to educational institutions. They also looked at Transporter by Connected

> *"ownCloud is 3-4-5 steps ahead of people with similar solutions. We ran it through the ringer and it really showed its flying colors. We tested multiple scenarios and [the ownCloud technical team] even brought in developers when necessary. ownCloud really stands behind its product and really got behind us – even though we were only testing at that point."*
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Data who offered file sync and share capabilities through an appliance. However, this would require more hardware, which also carried significant cost, and they would not be able to integrate with LDAP or Windows network drives. And because they own the Microsoft suite, they also tried OneDrive, which Crockett found to be *"buggy."* Only ownCloud provided the technical and economical solution they sought.

Happy with the capabilities that ownCloud has to offer, they downloaded a trial appliance of the ownCloud Enterprise Edition. They liked that the Enterprise Subscription afforded them the additional features as well as the exceptional support they relied upon during the evaluation process. From purchase to production, Ouachita invested approximately three months which included some significant changes within their environment.

Working with Red Hat & ownCloud

Despite being a Microsoft shop, Ouachita made a decision to deploy ownCloud on Linux. Starting with CentOS, IT quickly decided to move to Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) to ensure they had the support they wanted behind the Red Hat storage upon which they mounted two ownCloud Servers. They were drawn to the tailored Linux servers and the controlled environment inherent in Red Hat technology. Coordinating with a parallel initiative within the University IT department, Ouachita made the decision to get started with Red Hat from the beginning rather than face a migration down the road.

"Microsoft has been kind to educational institutions with pricing and support, but bringing Red Hat in allows us to consider other options in the future," said Crockett. *"We can rely on a new OS for the future and I'm always impressed with the stability of the Linux OS."*

Although having familiarity with Linux primarily with boxed appliance solutions, Crockett has embraced the opportunity to expand the technological reach of the IT department and to do so with the known support that comes with Red Hat.

Use Cases

Currently used by faculty and staff, ownCloud has become an integral part of the University's learning management system.

- Using Files Drop, the faculty is able to collect homework assignments and other files even if the student/collaborator does not have an ownCloud account. This is especially helpful with Ouachita Online.
- The staff is able to share a link with students that may be password protected or has an expiration date, and students can upload or download coursework.
- ownCloud brings in functionality without disrupting existing workflows.
- Access to files is possible from any device.

> *"People are excited to use ownCloud. They can get to all the files on the server, share files and there is more flexibility,"*
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> Rob Crockett, Network Administrator, Ouachita Baptist University

Working to train current users, Ouachita plans to *"release it to the masses"* once they're comfortable that it performs as it did in testing. *"I have one person knocking on my door daily asking when they can start using ownCloud, they're so excited."* Recognizing that user adoption is a critical component of a technology's success, Ouachita IT department wants to ensure that the first experience is very positive.

Benefits

In addition to the organization-wide benefits provided by access to files regardless of where they are stored, Ouachita is able to retain control of that data with a solution that is built to meet future requirements. ownCloud allows them to not only accommodate, but embrace the use of multiple devices by users and provides critical access to Windows file shares. The integration with the learning management system allows them to preserve workflows without disruption to end users and further opens up opportunities to expand the use of ownCloud in their online educational offerings. Knowing they have the support and expertise of ownCloud's technical team as well, ownCloud allows Ouachita Baptist University get back to doing what they do best – providing quality education to their students.

About ownCloud

ownCloud is the largest Open Source Filesharing solution in the world with 200.000 installations and more than 25 million users. ownCloud combines consumer-grade usability with enterprise-grade security (GDPR compliant).
It enables users to access data no matter where it is stored or which device is used. By giving organizations the visibility and control required to manage sensitive data while offering users the modern collaboration experience they demand, productivity and security are increased at the same time. For more information, visit:
https://owncloud.com

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