




Lancaster Central School District's Transition to VergeIO

Replacing VMware for Lower Costs and Greater Efficiency



Lancaster Central School District had been a VMware customer for over 15 years, operating a highly virtualized infrastructure that supported critical IT operations. When Broadcom acquired VMware, the proposed licensing costs increased dramatically. In addition to cost concerns, Lancaster had also begun modernizing its storage strategy by shifting away from traditional NAS to VMware vSAN. However, Broadcom was also significantly raising the costs of those licenses, making VMware's pricing structures unpredictable and posing budget challenges for the District.

The combination of challenges led Lancaster to evaluate alternatives to VMware and vSAN. The effort, led by Eric Miller, Manager of Information Services, and Tim Johnson, Senior Systems Administrator, was a significant initiative. After extensive evaluation, the District chose VergelO's VergeOS as its new virtualization platform, replacing VMware's ESXi hypervisor and vSAN with VergeOS. This transition yielded approximately \$150,000 in annual cost savings while providing noticeable performance improvements, enhanced deduplication, and increased resilience.



We needed a solution that wasn't just a replacement for VMware but an improvement. VergelO delivered exactly that.

Eric Miller, Manager of Information Services, Lancaster Central School District

CHALLENGES WITH VMWARE AND VSAN

Lancaster had been transitioning to VMware vSAN to provide software-defined storage for its virtualized workloads. Although vSAN had served its purpose, it required additional licensing and increased complexity in managing the District's IT environment. Performance also posed challenges, especially with snapshots and storage efficiency. Under VMware, persistent degradation of snapshot performance remained a concern, limiting their effectiveness as part of the District's data protection strategy.

Storage deduplication under vSAN also failed to meet expectations. As data volumes increased, storage efficiency became a major concern. Lancaster required a storage solution that provided better deduplication rates without adversely affecting performance.

Additionally, the District utilized a stretched cluster model with VMware. While this method provided some redundancy, it relied heavily on continuous network availability. A network failure could cause significant disruptions, posing a potential point of failure in the architecture.

EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

As VMware licensing costs rose and storage inefficiencies became evident, Lancaster began exploring alternative virtualization solutions. Various options were considered, including Microsoft Hyper-V, Nutanix, and Proxmox. The evaluation focused on:

- Cost
- Support quality
- Performance
- Storage integration
- Ease of management

VergelO quickly became the leading candidate. Unlike other solutions that required storage to run as a separate virtual machine (VM), VergelO's VergeFS was fully integrated into the VergeOS platform as a native service. This eliminated the need for bolt-on storage solutions like vSAN, reducing complexity and improving efficiency.

Support was another key factor. Lancaster's IT team anticipated needing vendor assistance during the transition. VergelO provides 100% US-based support, a major differentiator from competitors that outsource customer service. Lancaster had direct access to engineers who understood their infrastructure and provided immediate, knowledgeable assistance.



VergelO was head and shoulders above the competition in support. That's what we expect and demand.

Eric Miller, Manager of Information Services

MIGRATION FROM VMWARE TO VERGEIO

The transition from VMware to VergelO was carried out in phases, starting with a proof of concept (PoC) in May 2024, following discussions with VergelO, Dell, and DTG.

During the two-month PoC period, the District evaluated VergelO's:

- Performance
- Storage capabilities
- Management tools

The results confirmed that VergeFS was significantly more efficient than VMware's vSAN. By July 2024, the District began transitioning production workloads to VergelO. The migration was completed smoothly by November 2024, with no significant disruptions. VergelO's team worked closely with Lancaster, helping the IT staff adapt to the differences between VMware and VergeOS.

REPLACING VMWARE VSAN WITH VERGEFS

Lancaster replaced VMware vSAN with VergeFS, resulting in immediate benefits:

- No additional licensing fees
- Simplified administration
- Improved deduplication
- Better snapshot performance

Snapshot performance was a major improvement. Under VMware, frequent snapshots caused severe performance degradation. With VergeFS, snapshots were instantaneous and had no impact on performance, allowing the IT team to use them as the primary recovery method.



We can take snapshots of VMs without worrying about performance hits. That alone is a huge win.

Tim Johnson, Senior Systems Administrator

Storage efficiency also improved with VergeOS' inline global deduplication, which minimized storage usage without impacting performance. Unlike VMware's cluster-level deduplication, VergeFS applies deduplication at the core OS level, improving the efficiency of:

- RAM cache
- Network throughput
- Overall storage usage

VergeFS also proved more resilient. During an ISP failure, the VergeIO-powered infrastructure remained fully operational—something that would have caused disruptions under VMware's stretched cluster model.



If we were still on VMware's stretched cluster, our VMs would have had nowhere to go. With VergeIO, we stayed up so well we wouldn't have even known there was an outage.

Eric Miller, Manager of Information Services

COST SAVINGS AND OPERATIONAL BENEFITS

By moving to VergelO, Lancaster saved \$150,000 annually, primarily by eliminating VMware licensing costs. Additional savings came from:

- More efficient storage utilization
- Lower hardware requirements
- Reduced administrative overhead

Beyond financial savings, VergelO required less day-to-day management, allowing the IT team to focus on strategic initiatives instead of routine maintenance.



We wanted a system that did not require constant monitoring. VergelO is so good at handling things behind the scenes that we can concentrate on improving and developing new solutions for our District leveraging the Verge platform.

Tim Johnson, Senior Administrator,

FUTURE PLANS AND EXPANSION

With VergelO in place, Lancaster has positioned itself for long-term success. The District's next major initiative is a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) deployment, which will run on dedicated VergelO clusters. The IT team expects additional cost savings and performance benefits from VergelO's efficient resource management.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lancaster's transition provides key takeaways for organizations evaluating VMware alternatives:

- Fully integrated storage reduces complexity. VergelO eliminated the need for separate storage licensing and configuration.
- Deduplication and snapshots matter. VergeFS provided superior storage efficiency and performance over VMware's vSAN.
- Support is critical during migration. VergelO's 100% US-based team ensured a smooth transition.
- Cost savings go beyond licensing. Efficient storage utilization reduced hardware costs.

CONCLUSION

Cost savings, performance improvements, and simplified infrastructure management drove Lancaster's decision to move to VergelO. By replacing VMware vSAN with VergeFS, the District achieved greater scalability, enhanced data protection, and operational efficiency. The transition proved that an integrated approach to virtualization and storage can simplify IT operations while delivering lasting value.



Go with VergelO. Don't waste time looking at anything else.

Eric Miller, Manager of Information Services