Global architecture studio leverage data analytics with Nasuni and AWS

Founded in 1935, Chicago-based Perkins+Will is one of the premier architecture and design firms in the world. The company has expanded exponentially over the last two decades and now operates twenty-eight global design studios on nearly every continent. Perkins+Will employs 2,500 of some of the brightest designers in the world and prioritizes sustainability, health and wellness, innovation, social purpose, and diversity.

As the award-winning and environmentally conscious firm increased in size and reach, the challenge of protecting, managing, and accurately provisioning storage in all locations grew as well. The firm's leadership tasked the IT team with finding innovative solutions that would support a more global, collaborative business model. In 2013, after an intensive search and evaluation, Perkins+Will chose Nasuni.

Perkins&Will

Industry
AEC

Cloud file storage
Nasuni

Object storage
AWS

Use cases
NAS consolidation; data protection; global file synchronization

Benefits
60% cost reduction; global high-performance file infrastructure; 4X acceleration in post-M&A integration; AI/ML services; rapid ransomware recovery; reliable business continuity

Nasuni and Amazon S3

Perkins+Will was one of the first firms in its industry to grasp the transformative potential of cloud infrastructure. Under the guidance of its IT leadership team, the firm turned to Nasuni and Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) to overhaul file storage, data protection, global multi-site collaboration, and more. As the partnership between the firm and its solution providers has strengthened over the years, Perkins+Will has continued to push IT innovation, increasing its use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) services to unlock the value of its unstructured data.

Today, Nasuni has empowered Perkins+Will with a high-performance infrastructure that stores unstructured data in limitless Amazon S3 object storage and extends fast access and automatic data protection to all 28 of the firm's global design studios.

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> Our file data contains all the fundamental and institutional knowledge of our firm over the last 80 years. As we leverage Nasuni to tap into that knowledge using AI and ML tools powered by AWS, **we can drive intelligence, institutional knowledge, and new business** for the firm.
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> **Murali Selveraj**, CIO, Perkins+Will

Results

The impact of Nasuni and AWS at Perkins+Will can be distilled to five key benefits.

1. **Cost:** 60% cost savings, relative to continuing with traditional infrastructure, as the firm's cloud footprint has grown by 10X

2. **Speed:** Perkins+Will has extended global high-performance file access to all studios, accelerating business cycles and collaborative workflows

3. **Agility:** The firm now has a more nimble, on-demand, and elastic approach to file infrastructure that supports its growth and global strategy

4. **Innovation:** Perkins+Will has long been an innovation leader in its industry, and the move to Nasuni and AWS further cements its position

5. **AI & ML:** By moving its file data to the cloud with Nasuni, Perkins+Will can reimagine analytics and business intelligence and capitalize immediately as more advanced tools come online

In addition to these high-level benefits, Nasuni Continuous File Versioning™ has replaced the firm's backup system, reducing cost and complexity and improving recovery point and recovery time objectives (RPO and RTO). Amazon S3 increases storage durability by replicating all of the firm's data to multiple data centers in different regions, and Nasuni's use of immutable object storage protects the firm against ransomware attacks, allowing for rapid recoveries that minimize the malware's potential impact on the business.

The Nasuni Management Console (NMC) has proven to be an essential tool for IT as well, and Nasuni and AWS have successfully supported key strategic initiatives, including the global studio model, an M&A-driven approach to growth, and the aforementioned desire to leverage intelligent analytics.

Supporting a global studio model

When the firm's leadership made the strategic decision to shift to a global studio model, Perkins+Will needed the file infrastructure to support the move. "We wanted to be able to bring in the best resources from the best places, so we could use designers from any one of our 24 studios for any project," explains Selveraj. "We wanted to be able to bring together a designed in Boston and an architect in London to work on a project in Italy being run by our studio in Dubai."

If Perkins+Will had attempted this global, collaborative model using traditional storage infrastructure, the firm's costs would have skyrocketed, and inefficiencies and delays would have run rampant. Amazon S3 and Nasuni allowed Perkins+Will to build a true high-performance global storage infrastructure that also saved the firm money. "We can move data from one place to another place, but we still have that single source of truth across all our studios around the world," adds Selvaraj. "So we're not replicating data from one place to another and creating these inefficiencies. If you think about the drivers for why Nasuni is at Perkins+Will, it's fundamentally about economics and rock-solid, reliable performance."

4X acceleration of M&A integrations

Perkins+Will expands by acquiring smaller firms. Both the newly acquired studio and the firm at large want the integration to happen as quickly as possible, so Perkins+Will can see ROI, and start leveraging the new talent, and the new studio can begin to tap into its new resources. In the past, integrating these new locations would have been a hassle. Provisioning storage when these studios ran out of capacity would have been time-consuming and expensive. Nasuni is designed to simplify the process of integrating newly acquired companies, studios, or offices, all with a minimal impact on end users.

Selveraj estimates that the firm has reduced integration time from 12 months to 3 months thanks to Nasuni and AWS. And that 3-month delay is largely due to people, not technology. "This speed was not possible previously," Selveraj says, "and it is impacting the business because we can get our clients the best people as quickly as possible."

> Nasuni is designed to **simplify the process** of integrating newly acquired companies, studios, or offices, all with a minimal impact on end users.

The reason why we are using Nasuni, in addition to the cost exercise, is that **it's in complete alignment with the way the business is headed**," explains Selveraj. "We talked about global, near our clients, the best team across multiple offices. There's not a whole lot of choices in the storage world. And Nasuni is in perfect alignment with that thinking.

Murali Selveraj, CIO, Perkins+Will

Artificial intelligence and machine learning

Now that file data is stored in a Nasuni/AWS S3 solution instead of being siloed at different global locations, Perkins+Will can leverage cloud-based advanced AWS AI and ML tools like Amazon Kendra, Amazon Rekognition, and others. One of the initial use cases is visual search across past project files. When a new project opportunity arises, architects can search for specific elements in the proposal, find similar work the firm has successfully completed in the past, and thereby demonstrate their track record and ability to deliver.

Typically, searching for specific project characteristics, such as mixed-use facilities near rivers, or east-facing office buildings with rooftop gardens, or even doors of a specific size or color would be all but impossible, as such details aren't always captured in a file's metadata. Yet Perkins+Will can now use advanced AI/ML tools like AWS Rekognition to index such details, then make this index available to designers and architects preparing or submitting proposals. This is only possible because Nasuni can make this file data available to these services through the Nasuni Analytics Connector.

The firm has also run analytics on more than 500,000 drawings and photos of the company's projects. When working on a new project, designers can now search for graphics that illustrate how other, similar projects were designed and completed. This capability gets projects moving faster, in addition to helping them bid on new work.

Looking ahead

Perkins+Will plans to continue exploring more AI & ML services in the months ahead, and this is only possible because its file data is securely available in the cloud with Nasuni and AWS. And while the potential of intelligent analytics is an exciting prospect for the years to come, Perkins+Will is equally pleased with how their new cloud infrastructure has brought them closer to clients as they continue to globalize, improved their bottom line, and strengthened the firm's data protection capabilities with rapid ransomware recovery. Thanks in part to Nasuni and AWS, employee and executive confidence in IT has never been higher.

LEARN MORE

To learn more schedule a demo.

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Nasuni is a fluid data platform for enterprises facing an explosion of unstructured data in an AI world, eliminating the choice between expensive tinkering or an overwhelming transformation of your entire data infrastructure.

The Nasuni File Data Platform delivers effortless scale in hybrid cloud environments, enables control at the network edge, and meets the modern enterprise expectation for protected, insight- and AI-ready data. It simplifies file data management while increasing access and performance.

Consolidate data, cut costs, and empower users — all while transforming your data from obstacle into opportunity.