



Case Study: Lewis Group of Companies

Prominent Real Estate Firm Relies on Nasuni for Cloud File Services

Cloud transformation enhances file storage and data protection

Founded in 1955 and expanding ever since Ralph and Goldy Lewis established their first headquarters in Claremont, CA, The Lewis Group of Companies is one of the United States' largest privately held real estate development firms. Their core business focuses on developing mixed-use planned communities and residential subdivisions in California and Nevada, as well as building and owning rental communities, shopping centers, and office and industrial parks.

Developing 14.5 million square feet of commercial real estate and owning and managing more than 9,000 properties requires a significant amount of unstructured file data. Storing, protecting, and collaborating on this data for its 30 offices is now entrusted to Nasuni Cloud File Services backed by Microsoft Azure object storage.

Business and IT Challenges

Inadequate File Availability

Before modernizing its file storage with Nasuni, The Lewis Group had implemented traditional file storage in its main office in Southern California, along with terminal services to provide access to the centralized files from its regional offices. This centralized model created a single point of failure – if there was an outage at the main office, the entire company was impacted.

Says Michael Viselli, Senior IS Project Manager at The Lewis Group, “We liked having our file storage consolidated in one place. But it became clear we also needed to have



Summary

Industry: Real Estate

File Services: Nasuni

Object Storage: Microsoft Azure

File Capacity: 30 TB

Use Cases: File Server Consolidation; ROBO File Storage; Cross-Office File Synchronization; Data Protection; DR

Benefits: Unlimited Capacity On-Demand; 5-Minute RPO and RTO; Fast File Synchronization; 15-Minute Disaster Recovery; 65% Cost Reduction

files distributed in every office to ensure we could still conduct business if our main location was down.”

Costly Remote Office File Storage

The IT team considered replicating files to local file servers in every office to mitigate the risk of a device or site failure at its main office. However, bandwidth to the smaller offices made this implausible and the storage needed to keep duplicates of every file made cost projections skyrocket.

Adds Viselli, “It would have been a major hit to our budget to have to upgrade our bandwidth in 30 different offices.”

Slow File Access

The use of terminal services meant that enterprise files were accessed using private WAN bandwidth. As the company’s file data grew, the user experience became slow and sluggish, especially in the regional offices. For example, basic Microsoft Word documents were taking more than thirty seconds to open. The IT team found it increasingly difficult to support users such as the leasing office staff, whose job was to rent properties and arrange necessary repairs. Slow file open and save speeds meant the staff at The Lewis Group’s leasing offices were losing productivity and the ability to respond quickly to clients.

Solution

To improve file storage availability, accelerate file access, and more cost-effectively store, protect and collaborate on its rapidly growing file data, The Lewis Group decided to modernize its file infrastructure. Nasuni Cloud File Services, backed by Microsoft Azure object storage, was the firm’s choice.

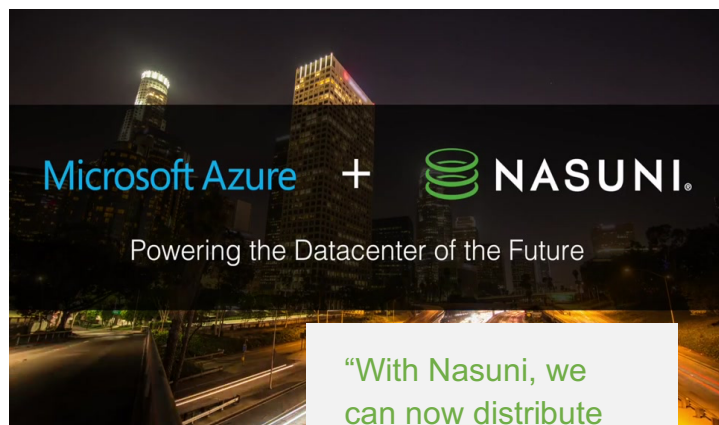
Today, Nasuni and Azure are fully deployed at The Lewis Group in a hybrid cloud configuration. The Nasuni UniFS® global file system stores all the firm’s files and associated metadata in limitless Azure object storage as the authoritative “gold copies,” then caches just the actively used files in each regional office on Nasuni Edge Appliances. Each local, LAN-connected appliance provides the same high-performance file access as a traditional NAS device or file server, but on a much smaller hardware footprint.

When files become inactive, they automatically leave the appliances and exist only in Azure object storage, eliminating the need to have full-sized file servers or NAS arrays in every office.

Results

Reliable File Storage

Now that Nasuni has consolidated all files in Azure, the IT team is resting easier knowing there is no longer any single point of failure. Nasuni Edge Appliances cache active files in each office, so if an appliance in one office goes offline, no other offices are affected.



“With Nasuni, we can now distribute our files to every office location to provide high speed access. Yet we get the benefits of centralization, infinite scale, and lower costs with Azure cloud storage.”

Michael Viselli
Senior IS Project Manager
The Lewis Group of Companies

Users who were mapped to the offline appliance can be rerouted to another appliance in the same office, another office, or the cloud in minutes.

Nasuni's intelligent caching algorithms yield a cache hit rate of nearly 99%, minimizing cloud egress charges and insulating users from cloud storage disruptions.

Azure adds more file storage durability by replicating all the company's data to multiple Azure data centers in different regions.

Says Viselli, "With Nasuni, we can now distribute our files to every office location to provide high speed access. Yet we get the benefits of centralization, infinite scale, and lower costs with Azure cloud storage."

Advanced Data Protection

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). As files are edited, the "shards" representing just the file fragments that have changed are continuously stored in Azure as their own unique WORM versions, creating an immutable history of every file.

The advantage of being able to recover files to almost any point in time became clear the first time an employee's file was infected by Cryptolocker, a type of ransomware that encrypts user files and demands money in return for the key to unlock them. Because the files were protected by Nasuni Continuous File Versioning, the IT team could restore the user's files in a few minutes to the version just before Cryptolocker hit, recovering her most recent work.

Explains Viselli, "Before Nasuni, we would have been looking at about a day of IT time to recover the data from our backup, complete the restore, and verify what versions of the files we could recover. Plus, the user's most recently completed work would have been gone."

High-Speed File Synchronization Across Offices

Nasuni's use of public internet links to securely synchronize file changes across locations enables users in different offices to work on the latest version of any file. This is enabling The Lewis Group to avoid the cost and complexity of upgrading private WAN bandwidth and adding WAN acceleration, FTP, and large file transfer tools.

When users need to collaborate on the same files at the same time, Nasuni Global File Lock™ technology prevents version conflict by allowing only one user to edit a file.

Says Viselli, "Nasuni has given us the flexibility to align our file infrastructure with the needs of our business. We implemented a volume for user home directories so users can access their files from any of our offices at local LAN speed. Updates to standard documents like leasing contracts happen faster. Managers in the field can save property reports and the changes are synchronized back to the central office in minutes. We've been able to do all this without upgrading the limited bandwidth we have at our smaller offices."



"Nasuni was a miracle that helped us do what we wanted to do for file storage — efficiently, cost-effectively, and with simpler management."

Michael Viselli
Senior IS Project Manager
The Lewis Group of Companies

Simplified Management

The Nasuni Management Console (NMC) serves as the control center for The Lewis Group's file infrastructure, providing the same centralized control they had before when storage was only in the main office and accessed via terminal services. Except now, file storage scales without limits in Azure object storage, and Nasuni Edge Appliances provide high-speed access in every location. The NMC enables the firm's IT team to centrally administer, provision, and monitor volumes, shares, appliances, and protocols through its web-based interface or programmatically through its REST API.

Cost Savings

The Lewis Group is achieving about a 65% cost savings compared to its previous file storage and backup infrastructure, while improving the overall user experience and reducing risk to the organization. Instead of building or leasing costly disaster recovery sites, the firm can rely on Azure geo-redundant storage and Nasuni's ability to rehydrate edge appliances in any location or in the cloud in less than 15 minutes to restore file access in the event of a disaster. Capital expenses to boost WAN bandwidth in regional offices have been avoided. Finally, because storage can be provisioned on-demand, the firm no longer purchases excess capacity in advance, and pays only for what it needs.



Next Steps

By showing a quick win with one of its first forays into cloud technology, The Lewis Group's IT team is regarded as a hero within the company. Thanks to Nasuni Cloud File Services and Azure object storage, they are channeling the cost savings into other strategic initiatives that help the firm deliver better service for its clients.

About Nasuni

Nasuni enables organizations to store, protect, synchronize and collaborate on files across all locations at scale. Nasuni Enterprise File Services™, powered by the Nasuni UniFS® global file system, leverages cloud storage to modernize NAS, file servers, archiving, and backup, while offering transformational new capabilities for multi-site file sharing. By combining the low cost, unlimited capacity, and durability of object storage from leading cloud vendors such as Amazon, Azure, Dell EMC, and IBM, with the high performance, security, and broad application compatibility of traditional file storage, the Nasuni subscription service improves workforce productivity, simplifies IT operations, and reduces IT costs. The world's largest companies in 12 industry sectors rely on Nasuni to maximize the business value of their file data and ensure business continuity. Nasuni is based in Boston, Mass. USA.

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