



INDUSTRY:

AEC

CLOUD FILE SERVICES:

Nasuni

CLOUD VDI:

Microsoft Azure Blob Storage

USE CASES:

File Server Silo Consolidation; File Backup & Recovery; Cloud Modernization; Global File Sharing/Collaboration; Remote Work & Cloud VDI

BENEFITS:

Reduce file sync wait times at remote sites from several hours to minutes; eliminate the need for a costly hardware refresh; shrink hardware footprint at the edge and within data centers; accelerate recoveries and reduce risk exposure

Engineering Firm Shrinks Hardware Footprint and Cuts File Sync Times with Nasuni® Cloud File Storage

Looking to provide efficient access to file shares for all office locations in a small footprint, and with flexible cost solutions, Ulteig turned to Nasuni for unlimited file storage, fast global collaboration, and lower costs.

In 1944, Melvin Ulteig launched a company to carry out his vision of bringing electricity to the Upper Midwest. More than 75 years later, Ulteig manages over 1,800 projects annually in 40 states, offering solutions across four lifeline sectors – Power, Renewables, Transportation and Water.

Ulteig doesn't operate like a traditional firm, with all the engineers and files associated with a given project working out of the same location. The 650 employee-owners at Ulteig reflect their founder's commitment

to collaboration, so Ulteig draws on its distributed talent for any given project, which means users in distant locations need to be able to collaborate as if they're in the same office. Unfortunately, the firm's file storage infrastructure was slowing access at remote offices, hampering productivity. Plus, the firm had just doubled its file data, and pushed their Nimble arrays to capacity. Ulteig's IT leadership had to decide whether to invest in more storage hardware and expand the firm's data center footprint, or modernize with the cloud.

“ We started looking for a solution that would leverage the cloud and grow with us, and Nasuni was a great fit,” explains Tyler Voegele, Enterprise Applications and Systems Lead at Ulteig. “Thankfully, our executives are really progressive as far as technology. As soon as we said we could avoid that upfront cost of on-premises technology and switch to cloud-based file storage as a service, with built-in backup, there wasn’t much more we needed to do to convince them. **Switching to Nasuni just made sense.** ”

Nasuni Cloud File Storage

Initially, Ulteig’s IT team evaluated several solutions, but once they studied the technical architecture of each platform, the choice was simple. “The differentiator for us was the cloud-based architecture,” says Voegele. “We like the way Nasuni’s synchronization works through the cloud, along with the centralized, cloud-based global file locking.”

With Nasuni, Ulteig’s file data now scales in Azure Blob storage, but frequently accessed files are cached locally on lightweight Nasuni Edge Appliances. High-speed, cloud-based synchronization ensures that end users everywhere have fast access to the latest copies of files – including AutoCAD and Autodesk Revit models – and Nasuni’s cloud-based Global File Lock® eliminates editing conflicts.

Right away, Nasuni allowed Ulteig to:



Reduce its hardware footprint at the edge and within two data centers



Free up space on its Nimble SAN array – and postpone a costly hardware refresh



Decommission multiple storage, backup, DR, and file sharing products



Cut file sync wait times at remote sites from multiple hours to minutes

Overall, the combination of Nasuni and Azure Blob storage continues to deliver a wide range of benefits.

Flexible Capacity

Nasuni allowed Ulteig to free capacity on its Nimble arrays, but it also gave the firm a plan for the future. “We’re leveraging more 3D design capabilities and modeling, and as that dataset begins to grow, it’s easier for us to expand our capacity with Nasuni and Azure,” explains Voegele. “We don’t have to scramble and buy another SAN to support the business.”

Accelerated Productivity

The firm’s previous collaboration solution was taking too long to synchronize files between distant locations, and had become a hassle for IT to maintain. Given the collaborative, cross-office nature of the firm’s work, this had to change. “We have people all over the US working on projects that might be in St. Paul, Minnesota or Denver, Colorado,” says Voegele. “Nasuni has allowed us to have more consistent replication times and increase our ability to scale. It allows our staff to upload significantly larger amounts of data without affecting replication times.”

OPEX Cost Model

In addition to avoiding the increasing hardware costs needed for a new SAN, Ulteig now has a more predictable cost structure. “All these upfront hardware costs that we were going to have to make are gone,” Voegele notes. “Now we can accurately predict and budget how much we’re going to pay for our file storage data.”

Simpler File Data Protection

Since Nasuni Continuous File Versioning® replaces traditional backup – and improves recovery points and recovery times – Ulteig was able to shut down several Veeam instances, compounding the cost savings.

Reduced IT Workload

Unlike traditional storage and backup, which have to be managed on a daily basis, Nasuni is a set-it-and-forget-it platform. “The sysadmin hardly has to touch it,” Voegele notes. “If you don’t have to look at something every day, that’s a huge burden off your shoulders, especially for IT.”

VDI & Remote Work Support

Ulteig already had multiple VDI infrastructures in place prior to the pandemic, including one in Azure, another with a third-party provider, and a third deployment in their own data center. One of the advantages of Nasuni is that it brings files closer to VDI instances, resulting in faster performance – and Ulteig has seen the difference firsthand. “We have a Nasuni appliance running in Azure along with multiple VMs, and it’s dead fast,” Voegele says. “It’s just like working on site.”

Hybrid VDI / VPN

In addition to its VDI infrastructure, Ulteig also has work-from-home users accessing files via VPN. Yet they are all accessing the same Nasuni-managed file data. “Whether they’re using VDI or VPN, they have access to the same files, and the copy is synchronized in minutes and there’s no lag time there,” explains Voegele. “That’s important, and it’s all thanks to Nasuni.”

Long-Term Outlook

Although they are relatively recent converts to cloud file storage, Voegele and Ulteig are already looking ahead. Voegele particularly interested in desktop sync functionality, which would reduce the firm’s reliance on VDI, and he’s generally appreciative of the firm’s technical relationship with Nasuni, and insight into future product directions. More than anything, though, Voegele says his IT group values what Nasuni is doing for Ulteig as a whole. “We take pride in our IT group that we’re not the barrier to business success,” Voegele says. “When you’re looking to innovate as a business, IT has to be able to pivot and support new initiatives, and being able to do that with Nasuni really sets us apart.”

About Nasuni

Nasuni is a file services platform built for the cloud, powered by the world’s only global file system, UniFS®. Nasuni consolidates Network Attached Storage (NAS) and file server silos in cloud storage, delivering infinite scale, built-in backup, global file sharing, and local file server performance, all at half the cost of traditional file infrastructures. The Nasuni software-as-a-service platform is most often used for NAS consolidation; backup and recovery modernization; multi-site file sharing; and rapid, infrastructure-free disaster recovery, while also serving as a foundation for data analytics and multi-cloud IT initiatives.



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