NASUNI

Case Sudy: Allied Integrated Marketing

Allied Integrated Marketing Unifies Creative Teams and Cuts File Transfer Times by 90% with Nasuni

Business and IT Challenges

Allied Integrated Marketing is a leading entertainment, culture and lifestyle agency. The firm has 21 offices across the U.S. and Canada, and counts global brands such as Disney, Netflix, Showtime and Paramount Pictures among its long list of notable clients.

As Allied's business has grown, the way its offices and divisions operate has changed. In the past, a group focused on a specific cultural community might have been centered entirely at one office. Today, that group's talents and expertise are needed everywhere. On a given project, Allied's account managers and creative workers need to be able to leverage the skills and expertise of their colleagues in distant offices, whether they're in another state, province, or continent.

The firm's file infrastructure wasn't designed to support these business needs. Allied Integrated Marketing VP of Technical Services Brian Weir identified several critical problems that needed to be fixed if the IT organization was going to help drive the firm's growth.

ALLIED INTEGRATED MARKETING

Summary

Global File System: Nasuni
Object Storage: Azure & AWS
Total Capacity: 30 TB
Locations: 21
Users: 500

Key Applications: Adobe Creative Cloud apps

Use Cases: NAS consolidation; multi-site file collaboration

Benefits: Multi-site creative content collaboration; faster file transfers; business agility; lower IT costs & reduced hardware

An Overly Complex Storage Environment

Like many creative agencies, Allied has to manage incredible storage growth as its creative teams work with larger and more complex Adobe Creative Cloud files, high-resolution photos, graphics, videos, and more. Storing, protecting and managing all this unstructured data was especially challenging because of the firm's heterogeneous storage environment. Allied had a SAN in one office, a local file server in another, and a long list of software solutions and services that were supposed to help users share and recover files.

Explains Weir, "We had all these individual file servers, plus a homemade vaulting system that took data from remote offices and vaulted it back to our central data center. It got pricey and hard to manage. We had to constantly monitor it to see if it was working. And it often wasn't working."

Slow File Transfers Between Offices

The pace of file transfers between offices was negatively impacting the business. Long waits clogged up valuable work hours.

Details Weir, "We have a creative team in NY and a team in LA that does movie ads. At 5 pm ET, when NY says they are done for the day, they would have to transfer their work to LA via file transfer, which could take 1 to 2 hours, depending upon how big the file was."

Impeding Expansion to New Locations

Allied is looking to expand its global presence, but if the firm were to open a new office in Europe or Asia, IT was concerned the new location would have slow access to shared file volumes. The expense and time needed to set up more storage hardware, data protection software, and file sharing solutions created another roadblock.

Unpredictable and Uncontrolled Costs

The firm's complex storage environment, strained by unchecked file growth, led to unpredictable costs, and IT often took the blame.

Explains Weir, "Like many IT organizations, we do financial forecasts to show our executives where our budget is being spent. We were constantly having to justify why we needed more storage in this office, then that office, then in our data center. The executives didn't understand why we had unanticipated spikes. To them, it looked like all IT did was spend money."

Allied Integrated Marketing's IT team found itself in an untenable situation. The environment they were forced to maintain did not support the core needs or strategic growth plans of the business, and it was costing too much IT time and budget to implement and manage.

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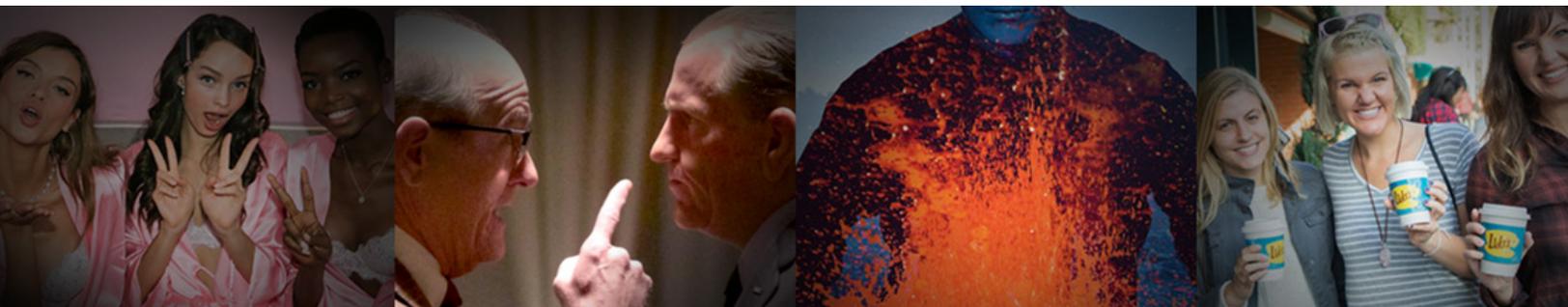
Solution

After evaluating several alternatives, Allied selected Nasuni, trading a hardware-centric, expensive, and difficult-to-manage mix of systems for a single file storage, backup, DR, synchronization, and management solution. In doing so, Allied is able to address multiple IT and business challenges and ready itself for continued growth.

Explains Weir, "Nasuni is an all-in-one solution. The fact that they built a file system that starts in cloud object storage and extends out to our offices via physical and virtual appliances defines them as the leader in helping businesses like us manage large amounts of data efficiently. Nasuni's ability to cache only the active data we're working on in each office means we don't have to have a ton of hardware in all our locations to give our creative teams high performance access to their files. Yet we know we have everything protected centrally in redundant cloud storage."

Results

Nasuni is now deployed with Azure object storage at all 21 locations across the U.S. and Canada. The Nasuni UniFS® global file system stores the gold copies of all files and metadata in centralized Azure object storage, while caching frequently used files locally on Nasuni Edge Appliances. These appliances ensure Allied's creative teams across North America – and, as the firm expands, the rest of the world – can quickly access the most recent versions of files, whether they're Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and Premiere files, high-resolution videos and images, or standard Office documents.

Unlimited Storage Capacity in the Cloud

Nasuni enables Allied to store, protect, manage, and extend access to all its files without worrying about capacity or volume limits. Applications can write to UniFS just like traditional SAN and NAS device-based file systems, except that UniFS scales without limits inside cloud storage. This means Allied can expand capacity to any level needed just by increasing its cloud storage and Nasuni subscriptions.

Adds Weir, "One of the things that really attracted us to Nasuni is that storage is now more of a predictable fixed cost. We're able to budget and account for storage enterprise-wide as we need it without over-provisioning or over-buying, which has helped with cost justification."

90% Reduction in File Transfer Times

Now that all files are stored and constantly updated in Nasuni's global file system, Weir and his colleagues can set up volumes that enable distributed project teams to collaborate as if they're in the same office. By compressing and de-duplicating data before it is stored in the cloud and synchronizing only the "shards" of files that change instead of entire files, Nasuni greatly accelerates file transfer speeds.

Confirms Weir, "Being able to use Nasuni to connect our New York and Los Angeles offices and synchronize volumes and file data has made it easier for our distributed creative teams to get their work done. Nasuni has reduced the time to synchronize files across offices by up to 90%."

More Efficient Project Workflows

Nasuni has also changed how distant offices collaborate, requiring far less of the standard, time-consuming back-and-forth.

Notes Weir, "The workflow typically had been that NY would start working on something and then they either had to send it through a file transfer or copy it to an FTP server. With Nasuni, we've created a volume that both locations share, and the directories and all the files they contain are automatically synchronized in real-time on both ends. Workers in each office can access what they need when they need it without having to consciously doing anything or bothering people in the other office."

Supporting Strategic Growth Through Agility

Nasuni is ideal for firms looking to expand to new territories or stand up temporary offices or job sites because a new location can be quickly brought online, connected to the global file system through a physical or virtual edge appliance, and granted secure access to the same files as headquarters – at a fraction of the cost of provisioning, connecting and protecting a new office using traditional storage hardware.

Adds Weir, "We're looking to open up a new division in Europe. One of the questons we had in the past was how to give them access to our content? With Nasuni, it's simple. We set up an edge appliance VM, configure it, and it instantly starts caching all the files they need. Bam, we're done. The agility Nasuni gives us is amazing."

Strong Security

Nasuni was designed with a strong focus on security. All files and metadata are encrypted with customer-controlled keys before they leave an organization's security perimeter.

Notes Weir, "Nasuni integrates with our Active Directory services on-premises, and it uses strong encryption algorithms to secure our file data in the cloud. So, even if someone could access our data, they wouldn't be able to see anything because they don't have the encryption key. This overcame any security concerns about leveraging the cloud for storage."

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Brian Weir
Integrated Marketing VP of Technical Services
Allied Integrated Marketing

Powerful Data Protection & Disaster Recovery

Nasuni's continuously versioning file system also protects Allied's files in cloud storage as they change, eliminating the need for separate file backup or DR solutions, while providing industry-leading recovery points and recovery times. Access can be restored to files, folders, and the entire file system within minutes of a data loss event or disaster.

30% Reduction in IT Costs

By enabling Allied to eliminate file servers, file transfer, backup and other solutions, Nasuni has delivered significant cost savings. Software licenses and maintenance costs have been significantly reduced.

Explains Weir, "Overall, we're saving about 30% just from the standpoint of not having to have other solutions to backup and vault our data. More savings will come from not having to refresh our file servers."

Next Steps

With Nasuni and cloud storage, Allied Integrated Marketing has the scalable file infrastructure it needs to continue to expand globally and get more out of its distributed expertise and creative talent.

However, the firm does not merely see Nasuni as a technology solution. From the initial onboarding through the continued support, Nasuni has offered a different kind of relationship that most other IT vendors.

Concludes Weir, "I've purchased many IT products over the course of my career. Nasuni's file services platform helps us solve a lot of daily IT annoyances and makes IT's life easier. But it's not just about the product. Nasuni sold us a partnership. Any issues we have, we know we can count on Nasuni Customer Support. It's not, 'Here's the product, now good luck.' Nasuni is as invested in our success as we are and sees our problems as their problems. That's the kind of relationship we need to successfully align IT with business objectives."

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> VP of Technical Services
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About Nasuni

Nasuni enables enterprises to store and synchronize files across all locations at any scale. Powered by the Nasuni UniFS® global file system, Nasuni file services stores unstructured data in object storage from providers such as Amazon, Dell EMC, IBM, and Microsoft, while caching actively used data wherever it is needed – on-premises or in the cloud – for high performance access. By using Nasuni to collaborate on files across multiple sites and consolidate Network Attached Storage (NAS) and remote office file servers, customers maximize productivity while reducing IT cost and complexity.

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