AEC industry leader Kleinfelder accelerates collaborative workflows and strengthens ransomware protection

Kleinfelder has been improving clients' transportation, water, and energy infrastructure since 1961. The firm's team of 3,000+ engineers, scientists, and construction professionals work across 100 offices in North America and Australia. After Director of IT Infrastructure Andy Kimura joined the company in 2019, his team began moving Kleinfelder's storage and data protection infrastructure to the cloud.

At first, the company upgraded from siloed file servers and backup solutions to Azure Files and Azure File Sync. This worked well, but as the company began to grow through acquisitions, a more collaborative model was needed, as talent frequently worked together between offices and regions. "Prior to that, most people just needed access to their local file servers, and Azure Files was fine with that," Kimura explained. "But as soon as we began to grow through major acquisitions, we realized we needed a different technology, and that's why we decided to use Nasuni."

KLEINFELDER
Bright People. Right Solutions.

Industry
AEC

File data platform
Nasuni

Object storage
Microsoft Azure

Use cases
NAS consolidation; global file synchronization; data protection; data intelligence

Benefits
High-speed global collaboration; intelligent ransomware protection; effortless scalability; fast edge performance; AI readiness

Once Nasuni had been deployed across the new offices, Kimura and his team soon realized the technology's broader value and rolled it out across the entire company.

Nasuni + Microsoft Azure

The Nasuni File Data Platform ensures that unstructured data across all Kleinfelder locations scales in Azure object storage while delivering low-latency cached access and fast collaboration through its cloud-native architecture. With 500+ customers relying on Nasuni and Azure, Nasuni's team has deep experience with enterprise-scale Azure migrations. "We had a lot of data to move, but we had a lot of help from Nasuni," Kimura noted. "We used Nasuni Professional Services, and we had a great Nasuni engineer helping us get the migration done correctly, and in a timely way."

Once the migration was complete, Kleinfelder benefited from a wide range of features and capabilities.

Effortless scale

While the original switch from traditional storage and backup to Azure Files eased many of Kimura's concerns, Kleinfelder began experiencing some capability limits. Nasuni is designed and architected to scale without limits inside the object store, and its platform design allows for an expanding set of capabilities, from advanced ransomware tools to data intelligence solutions like Nasuni IQ.

Fast performance

Kimura acknowledged that IT professionals in his position often worry that a cloud solution like Nasuni will lead to performance problems. "We can say this confidently, because we've implemented Nasuni everywhere, that performance is not something to worry about, especially for AutoCAD and GIS-type workloads," he explained.

Rapid ransomware recovery

Nasuni's cloud-native, continuously versioning file system allows for a completely different approach to disaster and/or ransomware recovery, relative to backup. "Nasuni basically points back to the file before it was modified," Kimura explained. "Having the confidence that you will be able to just go back to a point in time when you need to, is really comforting."

Intelligent ransomware protection

Nasuni engineers developed additional tools designed to help customers identify and contain ransomware attacks earlier. "One of the really cool things about the Nasuni platform compared to Azure Files is that it actually knows when a ransomware event is happening," Kimura said. "You can basically black-hole the source IP that's initiating the attack so that it stops." This helps companies get started on recoveries faster.

AI readiness

As of this writing, Kleinfelder has not implemented Nasuni IQ, but Kimura and his team are keenly interested in the tool and Nasuni's role in the use of AI going forward. The firm has already built an Azure OpenAI tool that allows its users to interact with structured datasets using natural language — to figure out, for example, which engineers have experience designing specific projects, such as bridges. "I'd love to be able to do that against the unstructured data we have in Nasuni because we have a lot more data there," he said. "That's the next frontier."
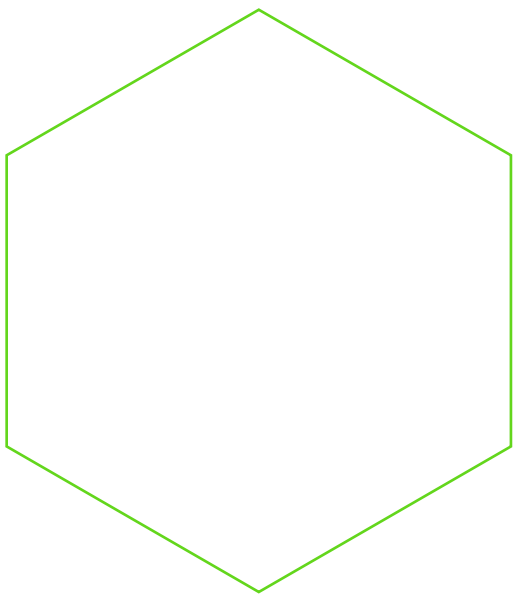
Why IT sleeps better on hybrid cloud

One of the more impactful results of the move away from traditional data protection to the cloud has been psychological. "If there's anybody on the fence about moving to a cloud-based system, I would say that it does work and that you should move forward," noted Kimura. "Ultimately, as a steward of the data, you're going to be able to sleep better at night knowing you don't have to worry about tapes or some kind of local backup."

Kimura is quick to add that this applies to both Azure Files and Nasuni. "For us, the move to Nasuni was about being able to have more capabilities," he said. "That was our goal. That was the ultimate. With Nasuni, we're able to do more, and the value of the data protection built into the platform — that's hard to quantify. But I know I sleep better at night. That's a huge ROI."

Nasuni is a scalable 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.