



McLaren Construction Group accelerates shift to agile cloud infrastructure with Nasuni®

Founded in 2001, McLaren Construction Group has rapidly expanded its business across the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates.

The privately-owned industry leader has led multiple high-profile construction projects and has continued to see strong year-on-year growth. The business prides itself on its ability to exceed expectations by challenging current ways of working to establish new and innovative approaches that create sustainable value. As McLaren continues to grow, IT is constantly working to maintain this agility and ensure that the firm's professionals have everything they need to continue to deliver projects on budget and on time or even ahead of time.

MCLAREN

Industry

Architecture, engineering and construction

Cloud file storage

Nasuni

Object storage

Microsoft Azure Blob storage

Use cases

File server consolidation; data center consolidation; cloud first; remote and branch office file storage

Benefits

Accelerated shift to cloud infrastructure; 50% cost and resource reduction; easy deployment to new locations; on-demand scale; support for WFH transition

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This focus on maintaining lean, agile operations prompted McLaren's IT leaders to look for ways to modernize the firm's file storage and data protection infrastructure. File data was growing at 25% annually, swallowing up capacity in McLaren's London data center. Files were also backed up to the cloud, which strained the firm's networks and created unnecessary extra work for IT. "I wanted to consolidate our file servers into a single solution that would be simple to manage, scale rapidly, and could easily be deployed to any new locations," recalls McLaren Head of IT Daniel Blackman. "Once I built out my list of requirements, I reviewed Nasuni, Panzura, Ctera, and Citrix."

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Nasuni cloud file storage

With Nasuni, McLaren's fast-growing file data now scales through Nasuni's UniFS® file system in Azure Blob object storage instead of on local file servers. Nasuni Edge Appliance VMs, deployed in various Azure regions near the firm's office locations, cache copies of frequently accessed files from Azure Blob, giving McLaren's 700 professionals fast access to the data they need through cloud-hosted SMB file shares.

Blackman and his team switched over to Nasuni in a matter of weeks, and the transition was seamless for end users. "The best part about changing our core file infrastructure to Nasuni is that it doesn't disrupt the business," says Blackman. "No one has recognized that our data is now in the cloud, and not on a file server in a London data center."

Nasuni helped McLaren accelerate its exit from one data center, and now that file data scales in the cloud, giving McLaren a much leaner, more efficient IT environment overall. The firm has also gained efficiencies and cost savings by replacing its file backup with Nasuni Continuous File Versioning® infinite snapshot technology, which stores all file change deltas as WORM versions in cost effective Azure Blob object storage.

Lean infrastructure

The switch to Nasuni cloud file storage enabled McLaren to eliminate:

- 12 on-premises file servers
- 12 additional DR servers in Azure
- Excess cloud capacity to store backups and backup software
- IT hours dedicated to managing backup and capacity

The last point is crucial, as it allows McLaren's lean IT group to focus on higher-value work that drives and supports the business.

50% Cost reduction

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Efficient scalability

Given its 25% annual growth rate, solving McLaren's file storage problem was essential. Nasuni not only moves file storage off local hardware and into cost-effective Azure Blob object storage, it enables McLaren to scale as needed, in smaller increments, rather than purchasing excess capacity upfront. McLaren has now expanded its Nasuni deployment by 50% in the first year.

Enhanced agility

Blackman and his team developed a site-in-a-box program that lets them literally drop a box into a new construction site, plug it in, and instantly provide all the IT services of a remote office. Nasuni adds the critical file sharing element, since Nasuni Edge VMs can be deployed on-premises as well as in the cloud for use cases that require local file synchronization. "If we have a huge job that requires 4D design, CAD, Autodesk, and the local performance of all that data," Blackman says, "we can simply slip a Nasuni VM into that site-in-a-box prior to shipping it to the location, and provide those users with fast, secure access to the files they need in a day."

Accelerated cloud architecture

The site-in-a-box concept is one of a long list of aggressive technology plans that stretches back several years at McLaren. Another example: Blackman's plan was to have a cloud-first, infrastructure-as-a-service architecture by Q1 of 2021. Thanks in large part to Nasuni, the firm achieved that ahead of schedule, in Q2 of 2020. "Even with the pandemic disruption," he says, "we delivered a year early."

Simpler management

The Nasuni Management Console gives IT single-pane-of-glass control over all of its file storage and data protection infrastructure, and Blackman appreciates the fact that Nasuni is easy for IT to master. "Nasuni is one of these things that you can easily adopt and understand," he says. "I can train anyone in the IT group to use Nasuni far quicker than I can with other technologies."

Analytics, mobile, and the road ahead

When the pandemic struck, Nasuni played an important role in making sure all McLaren users had fast access to the files they needed, and allowed the firm to optimize its financials with a service-based cost model in preparation for an uncertain market.

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Blackman is very keen to see the evolution of Nasuni mobile access, which would enable him to grant users access to files whether they're at a construction site or in a coffee shop. McLaren plans to make use of the Nasuni Analytics Connector as well. The construction industry is overrun with data, and Blackman intends to leverage analytics tools to find hidden value in the data, cull unnecessary data, and ensure that files are as secure as they need to be from a compliance point of view.

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The firm is pleased with what Nasuni has delivered thus far, and what the solution is poised to deliver in the future. "The ability to serve our largest construction sites with the performance of a local file server cache at the edge, whilst maintaining a single-pane-of-glass vision across all of our file repositories, knowing that it's under continuous protection, is really key," Blackman says. "The way in which Nasuni has the single unified platform of backup and file data storage in one really does help complement the solution and increase its ROI."



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Daniel Blackman, Head of IT, McLaren



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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.