Media Giant Speeds Cross-Office Collaboration and Reduces Data Protection Costs with Nasuni

Meredith Corporation shifts away from on-premise infrastructure to cloud infrastructure

Meredith Corporation is one of America's largest media companies and home of leading brands like People, Better Homes & Gardens, InStyle, and All Recipes. Founded in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1902 Meredith has its finger on the pulse of pop culture, entertainment, food, fashion, lifestyle, finance, and sports. The company reaches 185 million Americans each month – including a broadcast television reach of 11% of U.S. television households.

In 2018, Meredith Corporation purchased storied Time, Inc., along with its well-known titles, and quickly set about integrating the media conglomerate's employees. At an IT level, this first challenge was New York City. Director of Enterprise Infrastructure Dave Coffman was tasked with migrating 800 users out of Meredith's offices on 3rd Avenue and into Time's HQ downtown. And he needed to do it in just three months. The office had a single file server, and there was just a 1 GB connection stretching between the two locations. Coffman and his team evaluated their options and determined that they had only one path forward. "We said, let's do it. Let's order up Nasuni," Coffman recalls.

Leveraging AWS to Manage Unstructured Data

This wasn't exactly a spur-of-the-moment decision. Coffman and his colleagues had been searching for years for a more efficient and cost-effective way to store, protect, and collaborate on the company files. Even before the Time acquisition, Meredith's brands were struggling with:

- Rising costs associated with storing and protecting file data

- Growth in the size and volume of file data—especially Adobe Photoshop and InDesign files

Executive Summary

Industry: Media & Marketing
Global File System: Nasuni
Object Storage: Amazon Web Services

Use Cases: NAS Consolidation; Multi-Site File Collaboration; M&A Integration; Cloud First; Cloud Backup; Cloud Disaster Recovery; ROBO

Benefits: Faster collaboration on large Adobe Creative files; accelerated integration of 800 new users; infinite scalability and agility; elimination of backup; massive reduction of on-prem infrastructure.

- High infrastructure costs at small offices

- User complaints about slow file access

- Inefficient collaboration between distant offices

This last one was especially problematic. "We have people who provide content for our magazines located in one city, people who provide the images in another, and people who design the pages and layouts might be in another location. For a really long time, they were calling us to complain, saying how slow it was when they connected to the Des Moines server from New York City, for example," says Coffman. "We tried WAN acceleration and all sorts of other things, but we never could catch our white whale, a global file system."

Like many forward-thinking companies, Meredith had adopted a cloud-first strategy when evaluating new IT solutions. "When we first heard about Nasuni, we thought, this sounds like the thing we've been looking for forever—a global file system that would allow people in different geographic locations to collaborate," Coffman notes.

The company evaluated several other cloud file sharing and collaboration solutions, but decided they were too complex and expensive. With the pressure on to move the former Time users to their new location, he had to act quickly. "We started migrating files into Nasuni," he recalls. "We crossed our fingers, changed the DNS, and gave everyone instructions on how to connect to the server, and it has been a shining success. Everyone was on pins and needles, and Nasuni was our silver bullet."

The Cloud-Native Global File System

The Nasuni platform is built around UniFS®, the world's first cloud-native file system. At 25 Meredith offices—so far—virtual or physical edge appliances cache frequently accessed files for high-performance access. At the same time, UniFS maintains the "gold" or authoritative copy of each file in the cloud object store. Files and metadata both scale in the cloud, not on local hardware. This allows firms like Meredith to shrink their on-prem file infrastructure by as much as 80%.

"Nasuni is a killer replacement for the traditional local file server and it gives you the ability to get cross-office collaboration really humming along," Coffman adds.

Overall, Nasuni is enabling Meredith Corporation to:

1. Consolidate file infrastructure silos across large and small offices and integrate a newly acquired company under one global file system

2. Reduce costs by switching to an OPEX model, eliminating traditional file backup, and drastically reducing the need for on-prem infrastructure

3. Accelerate design and editing cycles for magazines on tight publishing schedules by introducing efficient collaboration between distant offices

As Coffman and his team have expanded the company's Nasuni deployment, they've also been finding other ways that Nasuni can help drive the brand's overall mission.

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Nasuni Cloud File Services

Flexible, Cost-Effective OPEX Storage

With Nasuni, Meredith Corporation has switched from CAPEX-based file storage to a more flexible OPEX, service-based model. This pay-as-you-grow capacity decouples storage growth from local hardware and can scale out to hundreds of global offices.

Infinite Scale & Agility Without Capacity Planning

Meredith's photo and design teams cherish high-resolution images. "Our teams work at the highest resolution possible," says Coffman. "They like to create new layers in a Photoshop image for every edit, and they don't like to compress their layers. We've got really large files." IT no longer needs to worry about local capacity planning at the offices, since file storage scales in the unlimited cloud, and can be increased on-demand.

Strengthening Design and Editorial Productivity

As each new magazine issue moves through its pre-publication editorial and design cycles, large Adobe Creative files need to move around the country—quickly. Meredith has centralized its image center, so all of the touch-ups happen in Des Moines. But the design and layout of each page might be happening in New York, and the editorial changes could take place elsewhere. Changes are being made right up to the deadline, when the digital file has to be transferred to the printer, and delays can translate into increased production costs—not to mention frustrated end users.

"For years we've been trying different technologies to get those files from Des Moines to New York where they can place them in InDesign documents," Coffman says. "We used to robocopy from a file server in Iowa to New York, but that was slow and terrible. Now we robocopy to Nasuni and let the magic happen. It's faster and way more reliable, so there's a lot less stress before the deadline."

The technical lead of the Editorial Operations team, Jared Annear, agrees with Coffman's take. "From an end-user perspective, Nasuni has been an extremely dependable file share tool for massive images which are needed on deadline," Annear says. "Nasuni is how our staff in Des Moines, IA are able to work directly with [their colleagues] in New York City and Birmingham, AL (and others) to send and receive files within minutes and always be sure the files are in sync across every location."

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> Meredith Corporation

Instant File Recovery Without Backups

Nasuni Continuous File Versioning® maintains a complete, versioned history of every file in the cloud. As files are written or changed, these deltas are securely propagated to the

cloud, maintaining the authoritative "gold" copy of the file. This new approach to data protection allows for instant file recovery and 15-minute Disaster Recovery.

Nasuni significantly reduces costs by completely eliminating the need for additional file backup, tapes, or Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity solutions. "If it's on Nasuni, I don't have to back it up," Coffman says. "So that saves us. We used to have NetApp file servers, and NetApp backup in the form of replication. With Nasuni we no longer need to have that redundant storage and purchase and maintain twice the capacity."

No More Noisy Neighbor Problems

"At one point we were using MassTransit, which is like Aspera, and our team would update a cover image and it would jump into MassTransit and it would basically clog up everything else. So we weren't able to do parallel transfers. Nasuni has really opened that up. We don't have that noisy neighbor problem anymore."

Huge Cost and Efficiency Savings at Small Offices

When the company set up a new office in the past, IT would deploy a NetApp filer and a few VMware servers—even for a small location. "That's a pretty expensive setup," Coffman notes. "Now at our smaller offices, we don't need to deploy that kind of footprint anymore. We can get by with the Nasuni physical appliances. That's going to be only about 15% to 20% of our original footprint cost."

These small, remote offices also become part of the larger global file system, with all the file data protection capabilities of a major location. And Coffman and his team can easily manage capacity, permissions, recoveries, and more through the Nasuni Management Console, giving them powerful remote oversight.

Outlook: Everything into Nasuni

The success of the Nasuni deployment, and the solution's more agile and cost-effective approach to file storage and data protection, have earned support from upper management. Coffman's plan is to convert each Meredith office to Nasuni, working behind the scenes to minimize disruption of end users.

He copies file data from a given office into Nasuni, informs the users that their server is being upgraded, and then completes the cutover, keeping the same DNS name so they don't even notice the difference. The stealth strategy has proven successful. "No news is good news and we haven't had any complaints," Coffman details. "For the most part people don't know that we've fundamentally changed the technology."

Yet Coffman and his superiors, along with the editors and designers, have seen a huge change, including:

- Faster and more reliable collaboration between distant offices
- The accelerated integration of 800 new users and their associated brands
- Infinite scalability and agility, plus a more flexible OPEX cost structure
- Instant file recovery and 15-minute DR without the need for backup
- Massive reduction of on-prem infrastructure

The success of the rollout has been encouraging, to say the least. "I like everything about Nasuni," Coffman says. "My plan is to get rid of all on-premises file servers and migrate everything into Nasuni."

About Nasuni

Nasuni enables organizations to store, protect, synchronize and collaborate on files across all locations at scale. Nasuni Cloud 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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