



Nasuni Case Study: TBWA

TBWA Unleashes Creative Talent with Nasuni's Global File System

Advertising leader achieving digital transformation and cost-saving objectives

TBWA is a unit of Omnicom Group, one of the the world's largest advertising agency holding companies. They are known as pirates - creative renegades who take risks and rewrite rules to come up with brave brand-building ideas for clients including Nissan, adidas, Henkel, Michelin and Gatorade.

However, it's hard to be creative when ideas cannot be shared. Files generated by TBWA's creative teams are among the company's most valuable assets. Storing, protecting, and sharing this creative content across the globe became a challenge for TBWA IT as the agency grew to 305 offices in 98 countries.

Explains Adam Sharp, CIO of International at TBWA, "We are a global company that was sharing files like the Tower of Babel. Up to half of the storage we purchased was never used. And backup, security, and DR were nowhere near where as great as we wanted them to be."

Business and IT Challenges

A Siloed Infrastructure

One of the unintended consequences of the firm's growth-through-acquisition strategy was a siloed IT infrastructure. Nearly every office was using different hardware and software solutions. TBWA was either buying a storage system per site or using a WAN to extend access to different local agencies from a central location. Comments Sharp, "If it could store files, we had it. Mac and Windows file servers, Google drive, enterprise SAN, JBOD, direct-attach disk, NAS, and more. We were about as far away from a unified global namespace as you could get."

TBWA

Summary

Global File System: Nasuni
Object Storage: In-house (private) with possible migration to public cloud

Total Capacity: 2.9 PB

Locations: 80

Users: 11,000

Key Applications: Adobe Creative Cloud, Microsoft Office

Use Cases: NAS and file server consolidation; global collaboration

Benefits: High-performance file access across offices; creative collaboration without version conflict; lower and more predictable storage costs; elimination of backup and tapes; improved recovery points and recovery times; simplified IT administration

Unreliable Backup

As unstructured data and the number of disparate file storage systems grew, the cost of backup rose exponentially, along with the difficulty of managing data protection. Many offices were still backing up to disk or tape, which then had to be taken off-site and stored in a warehouse. This resulted in unacceptable recovery points (RPO) and recovery times (RTO).

Says TBWA Global Technology Director Don Pointing, “Because every office was doing storage its own way, the problem translated to backup. We were spending a lot of money, time, and effort protecting our files, and not seeing great results.”



“Nasuni was our only real choice for being able to leverage object storage and still have the flexibility of traditional file storage that is needed for all our different use cases.”

Don Pointing, Global Technology Director, TBWA

Creative Content Collaboration Struggles

The Adobe Creative Cloud application files, high-resolution videos, Microsoft Office documents, and other files generated by TBWA’s creative teams are critical to client projects. Making these files available to creative professionals distributed across different geographies and securely sharing them with clients was a massive challenge.

Details Pointing, “We were storing many different versions of the same files in lots of different places. An immeasurable amount of our storage consisted of files that were unnecessarily duplicated. The lost user productivity from finding and resolving version conflict issues was even worse.”

Skyrocketing File Infrastructure Costs

The effort to maintain a global infrastructure was proving cost-prohibitive, especially given the growth of TBWA’s data.

Says Sharp, “We were buying file storage on a per site or per country basis and adding WAN overhead on top of it. This approach, which was time-consuming to deploy and configure, generally required us to purchase capacity five years in advance. We’d try to guess how much we were going to need and rarely got it right.”

Wasted IT Time and Talent

In addition to the cost of purchasing and licensing the necessary solutions for each site, TBWA had to hire IT talent at each location just to keep the infrastructure running.

Explains Pointing, “We hired a lot of high-end administrators who spent their entire time maintaining and managing storage, when they could be doing things that are a lot more interesting and strategic to the business.”



Solution

Under the leadership of Ted Colgate, CIO of TBWA\Worldwide, the IT team began investigating digital transformation technologies that could consolidate infrastructure, reduce costs, and improve service to the business. More scalable alternatives to legacy file storage and data protection became a top priority.

Object storage was chosen for its scalability and low cost, and TBWA decided on a private cloud solution that could be deployed on-premises in its own data centers. But a file system would be needed to make object storage usable for TBWA's primary file storage needs. Otherwise, they'd be back to managing files in every location, administering backups, and dealing with WAN issues. A file system was also needed to enable object storage to support TBWA's existing applications, scripts, and drive mappings, and present a familiar folder and directory structure to users.

Nasuni was the best solution for the agency's needs.

TBWA's Adobe Creative Cloud application files, images and other unstructured data are stored in the Nasuni UniFS® global file system, which scales natively inside object storage. While UniFS stores the master copies of all TBWA files in object storage, it also caches the actively used files and metadata on Nasuni edge appliances located at each global office. The appliances provide high performance file access through CIFS/SMB or NFS file sharing protocols, and look and act like TBWA's former NAS devices and file servers, except they require, on average, 80% less hardware resources, since they only store active files.

As TBWA's creative teams work on files from their Mac and Windows clients, Nasuni uses affordable, high-speed internet bandwidth to synchronize changes with the master

copies in object storage, then propagate the changes across all edge appliances for true multi-site creative collaboration.

Notes Pointing, “Nasuni was our best choice for being able to leverage object storage and still have the flexibility of traditional file storage that is needed for all our different use cases.”



Results

Nasuni has enabled TBWA to consolidate file storage, accelerate creative collaboration, and strengthen data protection, benefiting TBWA’s creatives and their clients, as well as IT and the business at large.

90 Nasuni edge appliances—including 80 VMs on VMware virtual infrastructure and 10 physical Nasuni appliances—have been deployed to provide access to nearly 2.9 PBs of Nasuni global file system capacity.

Local File Access with Cloud Scalability

In each TBWA location, a Nasuni edge appliance caches the frequently accessed files, ensuring the agency’s creative teams enjoy LAN-speed file sharing performance. However, as the only file system designed to reside fully in object storage instead of local controllers, Nasuni UniFS enables files and metadata to scale without limit in object storage, ensuring TBWA’s unstructured data can never outgrow the capacity of a local device.

Explains Sharp, “Given our multi-petabyte requirements, the scalability of Nasuni’s cloud-native file system was a major factor in our selection process. Other solutions we looked at were controller-based, and thus constrained by hardware limits. We needed a solution that would scale with our underlying private cloud storage, while still giving every office high-speed access to files. Nasuni has worked as advertised.”

Reduced Storage Costs and a Shift to OpEx

As subscription software centrally managed by IT, Nasuni enables TBWA to provision new storage for any of its locations with a few clicks. Capacity can be dialed up or down for any location, and Nasuni’s stateless edge appliances can be deployed, decommissioned, and redeployed as needed.

“Any global or multi-regional organization would benefit greatly from Nasuni because it provides a true global namespace for all files.”

Don Pointing,
Global Technology Director,
TBWA

Comments Pointing, “Now that we have Nasuni, we’ve broken the cycle of buying capacity five years in advance, and not being able to fully utilize it. Storage costs are much easier to control and storage provisioning across TBWA is much more efficient.”

High Speed File Sharing Across Offices

TBWA needed a solution that could share its large design files – including images, and Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator files – across multiple sites without delay. With many Mac users, the agency also needed to a solution that could support file sharing across macOS and Windows operating systems without performance delays or the loss of key Mac file system features.

Nasuni’s hub and spoke architecture, data sharding techniques that only transmit the small fragments of files that change, and use of affordable internet bandwidth for file transfer instead of costly MPLS WAN bandwidth meet TBWA’s needs for fast file synchronization. Nasuni’s advanced support for macOS SMB extensions, tags, long file and path names, extended metadata attributes, and other macOS features meets the usability needs of the agency’s creative professionals.

Says Pointing, “Global file sharing with Nasuni is simple, fast, and secure. Files get copied into a folder in one site, and they appear in Mac Finder or Windows Explorer somewhere else in the world within minutes. The productivity gained back by our creatives, who no longer have to sit idle waiting on files, is immeasurable.”

“Given the dynamic and demanding nature of our business, we look for IT vendors who can be a partner to us. We see Nasuni this way. One of their strengths is they listen to their customers and are responsive to their needs.”

Adam Sharp,
CIO of International,
TBWA



Sensitive Client Data Secured

Some of the world’s most iconic brands entrust TBWA with critical product information and details months before a public product release. TBWA needs to prove to it itself and its clients that files are safe and secure.

Strong Nasuni encryption, combined with the privacy and security of object storage, meets the agency’s strict standards. Nasuni encrypts the data before it leaves the security perimeter of each office using the AES encryption standard. Nasuni then stores the encrypted data in object storage. Since TBWA holds the encryption keys, no-one – not even the cloud storage provider or Nasuni – can “see” TBWA data, ensuring all files are secure both in transit and at rest.

Nasuni’s encryption and integration with TBWA’s Active Directory infrastructure means the company can take advantage of the benefits of cloud object storage and not compromise its internal security standards.

Data Redundancy Eliminated

Previously, TBWA had multiple versions of the same files stored across the world, with a considerable amount of this data being duplicated. Each Nasuni edge appliance deduplicates and compresses data before storing it in object storage, eliminating this redundancy and unnecessary costs.



Improved Data Protection

Nasuni continuously stores the fragments of files that change in object storage, maintaining an unlimited, easily accessible version history of every file. This eliminates the need for separate backup and DR.

Today, Nasuni continuous versioning with object storage geo-redundancy enables TBWA to restore access to files within minutes of a disaster.

Details Pointing, “Taking away the need to do traditional tape backups was very important. Nasuni’s continuous snapshots enables us to protect data in a consistent way globally. We’ve had offices go offline because of natural disasters in the past, and they were unable to work for over a week. Their RPOs and RTOs were inconsistent and often inadequate. Now, we can get files back quickly to very recent restore points. And if a disaster does occur, it’s a matter of hours, if that.”

Centralized Management and Redirected IT Resources

TBWA's consolidated IT teams can now manage the entire global file storage estate through the Nasuni Management Console. They spend less time managing shares, volumes, backup schedules, file restores, and WAN issues, and more time on the strategic IT projects that drive the business.

Next Steps

By switching from traditional file server, NAS, backup, and remote access solutions to a modern cloud solution based on Nasuni and in-house object storage, TBWA now has the scalable file storage, data protection, and global collaboration capabilities it needs to maximize its creative talent and optimize IT.

Nasuni's ability to work with any S3-compliant object storage solution also supports TBWA's cloud-agnostic strategy, which may entail migrating file data to Amazon, Azure, or Google public cloud storage in the future.

The continuing Nasuni deployment is part of an ongoing digital transformation initiative that gives TBWA agility, cost savings, and an enhanced ability to compete in an increasingly competitive industry. The agency is now positioned to adapt to growing creative file sizes, an increasingly distributed workforce, and evolving global business models.

About Nasuni

Nasuni enables organizations to store, protect, synchronize and collaborate on files across all locations at scale. Nasuni Enterprise File Services™, powered by the Nasuni UniFS® global file system, leverages cloud storage to modernize primary NAS and file server storage; archiving; backup; and disaster recovery, 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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