



Success Story

Homebuilder Reduces Backup Work by 80%, Frees Up IT Staff with Cloud Solution



Our solution partner:



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry

Manufacturing–Construction

The Challenge

Lower the cost and time spent protecting rapidly growing business data while keeping backed-up information readily accessible.

The Solution

Transition from tape-based backup to a hybrid cloud solution backed by NetApp® AltaVault® (formerly SteelStore) cloud-integrated storage and Microsoft® Azure™.

Benefits

- Reduced daily and weekly backups and associated management by 80%
- Boosts employee productivity by enhancing the reliability and accessibility of backed-up data
- Eliminated US\$28,000 per year in tape administration costs

Customer Profile

After nearly 40 years in business, Australian homebuilder Metricon had amassed nearly 40TB of house warranties and other business data. To reduce the time spent backing up this data and to keep it safer, Metricon switched from tape backups to a hybrid cloud solution involving NetApp AltaVault (formerly SteelStore) cloud-integrated storage and Microsoft Azure. By backing up data to the cloud, Metricon reduced tape backup work by 80% and eliminated US\$28,000 per year in tape administration costs. It also improved backup reliability.

The Challenge

Tens of thousands of Australians live in Metricon homes. One of the largest residential homebuilders in Australia, Metricon has built homes of all sizes and styles in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland since its establishment in 1976. Metricon keeps a close eye on market trends and pioneered such ideas as developing planned lifestyle communities located near the water and offering developer financing.

Metricon's pioneering spirit extends to its use of technology. It aims to stay abreast of the latest trends, to enhance its ability to smoothly run a national multiple-office operation, to keep mobile employees productive, to boost employee efficiency, and to protect business data. But there was one critical area of Metricon's Melbourne data center that consumed even more of the company's IT staff's time, budget, and peace of mind: data backups. In nearly 40 years of business, the company had amassed nearly 40TB of data that it backed up to tapes and moved off site for safekeeping.

By early 2014, George Chen, server engineer in the Metricon Information Technology Group, and Andrew Hocking together spent 10 hours a week managing backups. "Our infrastructure team is quite lean, and backups were becoming a time drain," Chen says. "They were taking time away from managing and improving our business-critical systems." If employees needed access to an archived file, it took hours to retrieve it.

Chen also worried about the integrity of tape media, which could deteriorate over time. “Our homes come with 25-year warranties, so we keep our backup tapes for decades,” Chen says. In addition to home warranties, Metricon must keep copies of contracts and other documents on file for seven years to meet legal requirements. “Tapes and tape drives break,” Chen says. “We need to help ensure that we have warranties and other documents on hand if our customers need them.”

The Solution

In 2013, Metricon moved its e-mail messaging to Microsoft Office 365, a cloud service run from Microsoft data centers that provides not only e-mail but collaboration, audio, and videoconferencing and the Microsoft Office applications. With this change, Metricon gave employees better mobile access to their e-mail messages and larger inboxes.

“We realized that by also moving our backups to the cloud, our data would be far more secure than if stored on tape,” Chen says.

Metricon began by backing up data directly to Microsoft Azure Blob Storage. However, after a month of data transfer, much of its 39TB still had not made it into Microsoft Azure. The backup software Metricon relied on worked inefficiently over the company’s standard Internet connection.

Chen began to investigate storage appliance products that could speed up the transfer and selected the NetApp AltaVault cloud storage appliance. Now, Metricon backs up data to a local NetApp AltaVault solution, which applies deduplication technology to eliminate redundancy within the data and then transfers files to Microsoft Azure based on access frequency.

NetApp AltaVault keeps frequently accessed data cached on the appliance to improve access time while also enabling the entire dataset to be secured in Azure. NetApp AltaVault deduplication reduced the amount of Metricon data stored in the cloud from 39TB to just 7TB, which were copied to Azure in one week. Metricon still has the same backup policies—daily incremental backups and full weekly backups—but utilizes AltaVault rather than tape as the backup target.

Business Benefits

By replacing tapes with NetApp AltaVault, Metricon reduced its backup work and costs and improved the reliability and accessibility of document backups.

Reduced time spent on backup by 80%

Now, daily and weekly backups are faster, but the biggest time savings come from a reduction in backup management work. There is no longer a need to monitor the backup process and change tapes. “By using Microsoft Azure and NetApp AltaVault, we are spending 2 hours a week instead of 10 on backup work,” Chen says. “We can use these eight extra hours for more important things such as rolling out Microsoft Office 2013, upgrading to Microsoft System Center 2012 Configuration Manager, and deploying new technologies and implementing initiatives that improve the business.”

Improved the reliability and accessibility of backups

Backing up files to NetApp AltaVault and Microsoft Azure also gives Metricon more reliable and accessible backups. “There is a peace of mind knowing that our data is backed up to the cloud,” Chen says. “We also have much faster access to our files whenever we want

them. Restoring files from NetApp AltaVault and Microsoft Azure takes minutes versus the hours required to request backups from off-site tapes. This keeps employees productive and the business moving without interruption.”

Trimmed storage costs by \$28,000 annually

By eliminating tape, tape drives, and tape storage fees, Metricon saves AUD\$2,500 a month, or AUD\$30,000 (US\$28,000) annually. Plus, thanks to NetApp AltaVault deduplication, Metricon reduced the amount of data stored in Microsoft Azure by a factor of 5.5: its 39TB of data were slimmed down to just 7TB. “Our data is growing at a rate of about 20% a year, so reducing storage costs is important as the business grows,” Chen says. “With NetApp AltaVault and Microsoft Azure we can now accommodate data growth cost-effectively and with greater peace of mind.”

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

Hardware

NetApp AltaVault (formerly SteelStore) cloud-integrated storage

Software and Services

Microsoft Azure Blob Storage



Leading organizations worldwide count on NetApp for software, systems and services to manage and store their data. Customers value our teamwork, expertise and passion for helping them succeed now and into the future.

www.netapp.com

© 2015 NetApp, Inc. All rights reserved. No portions of this document may be reproduced without prior written consent of NetApp, Inc. Specifications are subject to change without notice. NetApp and the NetApp logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of NetApp, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. Microsoft is a registered trademark and Azure is a trademark of Microsoft Corporation. All other brands or products are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders and should be treated as such. CSS-8789-0515

Follow us on: