

Global Leader in Commercial
Aviation Upgrades to Nutanix to
Simplify Management, Reduce
Data Center Footprint, and
Lower Oracle Licensing Costs

GA Telesis Reaches New Heights with Nutanix Acropolis



CHALLENGE

After achieving success in its commercial aviation component business, GA Telesis LLC built on that momentum through strategic acquisitions aimed at vertically integrating the company's core businesses. "Our customers operate in the commercial aviation sector," explained Darryl Maraj, VP of Global Technologies at GA Telesis. "We manage multiple touchpoints with almost every major airline. If you've flown on any commercial airlines, they are probably a customer of GA Telesis."

GA Telesis' IT demands and complexities increased with the rapid growth of the company. Each acquisition posed a new challenge in terms of integrating a wide array of legacy systems into the existing infrastructure. GA Telesis was also due for an infrastructure upgrade. Its then current EMC storage appliances were reaching end of life, and the cost of maintenance had escalated. System management was also a challenge for the company's IT team.

"The EMC environment posed unique challenges due to being increasingly resource-intensive," noted Maraj. "Creating Logical Unit Numbers (LUNs) and managing storage had grown to become a full-time job. We are in the business of creating value for our customers—we are not an IT company; diverting valuable company resources to managing storage systems took away from our core processes: developing strategic solutions for our aviation customers."

Looking for a Better Solution

GA Telesis started the search for new IT infrastructure in 2016. Maraj and his team looked at a wide range of options, including traditional storage and server solutions from Dell and EMC, Pure Storage, Tintri, and several others. They also looked at hyperconverged storage and server offerings from Nutanix, Simplivity, Cisco UCS, and EMC VxRail.

In addition to evaluating the performance and manageability of the proposed solutions, Maraj also looked at the technology roadmap and management structure of each company, and calculated how the chosen systems would impact their Oracle license fees. "With the introduction of hyperconverged systems, we weren't just upgrading storage; we were also replacing our core infrastructure," explained Maraj.

After a thorough review of the options, GA Telesis narrowed its search to Nutanix and EMC's all-flash systems. Nutanix's ease of management, dashboards, and non-disruptive software updates really stood out. Maraj was also impressed with Nutanix's Data Locality capability. "With Data Locality, the data used by each VM resides primarily on the same node with a secondary copy on flash storage—only 1 hop away in case it's needed," Maraj shared. "Data Locality enhances performance and eliminates the 'noisy neighbor' problem so common in traditional storage environments."

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— Darryl Maraj,
VP of Global Technologies,
GA Telesis LLC

"Since our core business is aviation and facilitating revenue growth – management's duty is to ensure non-core business expenses directly support customer satisfaction, ergo an emphasis is placed on functions which yield growth in both business development and revenue. After our internal review, Nutanix's hyperconverged Enterprise Cloud Platform delivered our solution at half the cost of traditional servers, storage, and network systems."

SOLUTION

GA Telesis purchased its first Nutanix NX-6000 series 4-node cluster in December of 2016 and subsequently installed the system at the company's primary data center for all production workloads. "We have encountered at least one major infrastructure implementation project each of the last four years," Maraj explained. "Nutanix's proactive approach to our needs provided for seamless installation and deployment, even before the contract had been executed. Furthermore, once the contract had been executed and received by Nutanix, Nutanix held another strategy, implementation, and deployment discussion to once again review the narrative; a truly encouraging and reassuring act which reaffirmed our decision to choose Nutanix for our IT solutions. There weren't any surprises along the way, and when the deployment day came—even the pre-cut cable lengths were correct!"

RESULTS

Easy Deployment

"Our prior solutions took at least a month to deploy," according to Maraj. "We'd spend a lot of time going back and forth with the vendor, asking questions on the configuration. Once we finally had a solid implementation plan, it took a full week to deploy."

The Nutanix deployment went even faster than anticipated. "Nutanix promised to deploy the systems in under four hours, and we held them to it," Maraj said. "Due to their detailed playlist, the Nutanix team's rapid deployment did not disappoint. Nutanix was able to set up our entire data center—complete with storage, servers, switches, and VMware hypervisor—in less than two hours. Had our systems engineers not inquired about their processes, the system would likely have been completed in under sixty minutes!"

Simplified Management

GA Telesis chose Nutanix primarily due to the platform's ease of management. "We did see a small increase in performance moving off of the EMC systems, but that wasn't the main driver for choosing Nutanix," Maraj explained. "The learning process is much shorter with Nutanix; you can just jump in and start working. Management is infinitely simpler on Nutanix. All of the information we need is the Prism dashboard. Not only are we spending far less time managing our infrastructure, we are finding and fixing issues that we didn't even know existed before we moved to Nutanix."

Faster VM Deployments

Due to the complexities and necessity of involving multiple parties, it used to take between two and three hours to deploy new VMs in the past. "We'd have to get our storage specialist to go in and create the LUNs, and ask our VMware admin to make sure that LUNs were added into the VM environment. Then we'd copy in the correct ISOs, and finally start the deployment. With Nutanix, it only takes five minutes to deploy a new VM, and anyone on our team can do it," noted Maraj.

Smaller Data Center Footprint

"We're getting a 3:2 reduction with Nutanix compression and deduplication, which cut down the amount of space we needed in our main datacenter," explained Maraj. "Our EMC equipment filled 1.5 racks, and Nutanix only takes 8 to 10U. With Nutanix, we can now move into new data centers at less than half the cost of using traditional hardware."

Lower Oracle Licensing

The reduction in Oracle licensing fees resulted in another ‘big win’ for GA Telesis. “Oracle informed us that it wouldn’t make any difference in licensing costs if we went with traditional infrastructure or hyperconverged architecture,” Maraj said. “While researching Nutanix, we found a white paper that showed how we could segregate the Oracle environment and keep it on just one Nutanix node. Thanks to the leverage we received from the Nutanix paper, we are only paying 1/4 of the licensing costs for Oracle.”

Working with Nutanix

The Nutanix support experience has been excellent, according to Maraj. “We rarely have to engage Nutanix Support, since the systems are so reliable and the dashboard is extremely robust. It even provides links to technical articles, so we can try to debug the environment ourselves first. Nutanix consistently delivers above and beyond expectations in terms of response time and fast resolution to any issues.”

NEXT STEPS

GA Telesis continues to explore how Nutanix AHV could further improve their existing infrastructure. “Based on the information received, we can convert from VMware to AHV with no problems and save significantly on licensing costs.”

GA Telesis also plans to place additional Nutanix systems at other company locations. “We’d like to take the same Nutanix model that we have in our primary datacenter, and replicate it to some of our other sites,” noted Maraj. “We have an engine shop in Finland that has a decent sized Oracle footprint that is due for a refresh. We are planning to install an additional Nutanix system at that site.”

Final Thoughts

“One aspect we really love about Nutanix—even more than the technology itself—is all of the people we deal with on a regular basis. They aren’t pushy, and they’re all incredibly helpful. Since we were replacing an entire data center, we had to be sure we would not face downtime after switching over; we didn’t want to cause the company downtime as a result of choosing this solution. Nutanix performed well above all of our expectations, both in terms of the technology and our interactions with everyone on the Nutanix team. Upgrading to Nutanix was an overall win for our organization,” concluded Maraj.

Company

GA Telesis is one of the world’s largest commercial aerospace firms, with over \$1.0 billion in assets under management. Founded in 2002 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, GA Telesis operates sales, leasing, distribution, and maintenance facilities in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Finland, and China.

Industry

Aerospace

Business Need

Legacy storage systems had been difficult to deploy and manage. GA Telesis wanted to reduce IT management time, lower licensing costs, and increase storage capacity while meeting performance needs for key business applications.

Solution

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform:

- › Nutanix Acropolis NX-6000 series systems
- › Nutanix Prism management solution

Benefits

- › Lowered the time to deploy new storage systems from 1 week to <2 hours
- › Simplified ongoing storage management and troubleshooting
- › Cut VM deployment time from two hours to five minutes
- › Reduced datacenter footprint from 1.5 racks to 10U
- › Obtained 75% cost savings on Oracle licensing fees



T. 855.NUTANIX (855.688.2649) | F. 408.916.4039
info@nutanix.com | www.nutanix.com | @nutanix

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