**Nutanix All-Flash Solution
Simplifies Management
and Improves Performance
for all Critical Workloads**

Valpak Loads on the Savings and Agility with Enterprise Clouds

CHALLENGES

"When we started looking at new IT solutions, our main concern was the overall cost of the storage platform," explained Chris Cate, EVP and CIO of Valpak. "The ever-increasing costs of upgrading traditional SAN environments—in our case Hitachi, NetApp and Brocade systems—were becoming excessive."

The other issue facing Valpak was the complexity of its legacy SAN environment. "We wanted to find infrastructure that was easier to manage," noted Cate. "With our traditional environment, we were always having to determine if we had enough Fibre Channel switch architecture with our big heavy SANs. It also took a lot of time to provision those disks, with only one person in the company that had the technical depth of knowledge to manage that environment."

"System maintenance was very time consuming in our old SAN environment," explained Jim VanBrocklin, IT manager at Valpak. "Whenever we upgraded one component, it caused a lot of disruption downstream, since I had to upgrade every switchboard and HBA on every system that didn't need it. Our company runs on technology--our factory floor is highly automated and uses a lot of robotics. Our success depends on how well our IT works. Infrastructure management had become excessive, so we decided it was time to look for a simpler solution."

"Several vendors tried to sell us a 'converged rack' type of scenario, but they were just racks filled with the same components I already had, so I didn't really see the point," Cate shared. "The Nutanix hyper converged systems were the only solution that provided both the simplicity and higher performance that we were looking for."

SOLUTION

Valpak purchased its first Nutanix NX-3000 Series system after its parent organization acquired a new company. "We needed to move 25 of their Dell systems and two NetApp systems over to our data center," VanBrocklin said. "Instead of moving all of that outdated hardware and integrating it with our existing infrastructure, we decided to put everything onto one Nutanix block. We went from two full racks of Dell and NetApp down to just 4U of Nutanix. Our power bill dropped significantly and the performance increases on Nutanix were impressive."

Valpak deployed its first Nutanix system without running a proof of concept (POC) demo. "Both Chris and I have been doing this type of work all of our lives, so we understood the concept already," noted VanBrocklin. "We didn't need to run any tests to prove that it would work. The Nutanix hyper converged architecture is just a different way of assembling what we already had, so we just jumped right in."

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> – Chris Cate, EVP and CIO, Valpak

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"The POC was essentially the NX-3000 Series that we put up for the new company," Cate reflected. "The Nutanix deployment was incredibly simple. Standing up our Fibre Channel network with multiple arrays always took several weeks or even months. In contrast, it took just two hours to deploy the Nutanix system, and then a couple of days to move all of our applications over. The entire deployment was at least 10 times faster on Nutanix than our old legacy environment."

Adding All-Flash

After seeing how well the NX-3450 system worked for the newly acquired company's workloads, Valpak purchased Nutanix NX-9000 all-flash systems. They now have four clusters, with 23 nodes and hundreds of VMs on Nutanix, located at the company's main datacenter in Florida and another at their DR site in Georgia.

"The main reason we bought the NX-9000s was to tackle some tier 1 workloads," explained VanBrocklin. "We are moving some of our really high IOPS data warehouse analytics applications over to the NX-9000 systems, because those apps tend to monopolize anything we put them on. After we see what capacity we have after that move, we will migrate more of our business intelligence and analytics workloads that will benefit from the all-flash storage over to Nutanix, including our Java application servers, WordPress, SQL Server, SAP, and Sybase databases."

"We haven't found any workload that doesn't run better on the Nutanix platform," added Cate. "As a result, we are exiting the traditional SAN environment over time as we end-of-life our current platforms and tear out the Fibre Channel infrastructure. We plan to be a Nutanix-only shop going forward—I see no reason to use anything else."

RESULTS
20% Faster Performance and 8x Lower Latencies

"All of our OLTP and OLAP workloads are running at least 20% faster on Nutanix than the 'bare-metal plus SAN' environment with similar processors," noted Cate. "And it wasn't end of life equipment—we had a NetApp system and some new x86 servers. The increased speed is due to the Nutanix architecture with all of the storage tiering, locality, and caching. Nutanix also provides about eight times the IOPS that NetApp could do. That was the most surprising metric for us."

Simpler Scalability and Lower OpEx

"Adding additional workloads is a snap with Nutanix," said VanBrocklin. "You just bring another block in, rack it up, connect it, bring it up, and it auto expands the clusters. I can't stress enough the speed at which we can put up and move new systems now. We are talking weeks and months in the old world, vs just a few hours with Nutanix. We realized a massive reduction in the cost to operate and manage our platforms by moving to Nutanix."

"System management was always disruptive in the old environment," VanBrocklin recalled. "If I had to upgrade HBAs on any of the servers, they had to be taken offline. And since we had about 100 servers, I had to work nearly every weekend, even for just a minimal upgrade. All total, I was spending between 80-160 hours each month in the traditional SAN environment, checking and preparing tasks, rollouts, and scheduling upgrades during off-hours. With Nutanix, I am only spending 1-2 hours per month on management. I upgraded the last cluster during lunch last week while everybody was working and no one even noticed. I'm now able to concentrate on more strategic IT projects, since I don't need to deal with 500 different firmware levels, or eight different HBAs to keep my environment up to date."

CapEx Reduction

"By moving to Nutanix, we were able to realize a 10x reduction in aggregated capital costs," Cate said. "If you compare the wholesale replacement costs or upgrades that our traditional SAN environment would have required, versus what we are doing with Nutanix, we have obtained an order of magnitude reduction on the capital side."

"We can now easily grow in smaller increments," added VanBrocklin. "We used to have to buy multiple years' worth of storage upfront, guessing how much capacity and performance we might need in the future. Nutanix's pay-as-you-grow model has enabled us to obtain higher utilization of our IT resources and more efficient use of our IT spend."

NEXT STEPS

"Whether it be cloning, or eventually getting rid of unneeded licenses with a move to the Nutanix AHV, we see a lot of ways that Nutanix can continue to save us money down the road by becoming more and more efficient," Cate explained. "Nutanix is enabling us to displace the tools and other packages we are now using for DR. The software and feature benefits that are built into Nutanix are costly add-ons in a traditional SAN environments. That's another reason we have chosen to partner with Nutanix."

Nutanix is also enabling Valpak to implement more efficient DR between its Florida and Georgia datacenters. "In the past, we cobbled together our own DR solutions," VanBrocklin said. "We used Oracle Data Guard, Sybase Replication Server, and several other tools to keep our apps and disks in sync. As we rebuild our DR site based on Nutanix technologies, we are going to have a much more supportable environment at a much lower cost."

"I can't afford to hire two or three more teams to help maintain our DR environment," noted Cate. "The Nutanix infrastructure is so much simpler to maintain from a staffing perspective. There is no way I could manage with such a small IT team if we were doing DR the old way."

"From a speed to market perspective, Nutanix allows us to roll out and expand our technology footprint in a very easy and quick way, versus having these massive infrastructure projects that are slow and take over a year to complete," Cate concluded. "We are very committed to our partnership with Nutanix going forward."

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

COMPANY

Valpak Direct Marketing Systems can bundle loads of savings into one little Blue Envelope. Its well-known package of coupons contains discounts on services ranging from dry cleaning to auto services to home improvement. Valpak is one of the leading direct marketing companies in North America, offering print and digital advertising solutions. The company operates more than 160 franchise locations, and each month Valpak envelopes of savings are mailed to nearly 39 million demographically targeted households in 45 states and four Canadian provinces. Founded in 1968, Valpak is based in St. Petersburg, FL and is owned by Cox Target Media, a subsidiary of Cox Media Group in Atlanta.

INDUSTRY
Marketing and Advertising

BUSINESS NEEDS
Wanted to obtain simpler and more cost-effective storage and server infrastructure, and increase critical application performance.

SOLUTION
Nutanix enterprise cloud platforms

› Nutanix NX-3000-series and NX-9000-series systems

› Nutanix Prism

BENEFITS
› Accelerated deployments by 10x

› Obtained 8x improvements in performance

› Cut management time from 180 hours per month to just 2 hours

Valpak Based in St. Petersburg, FL, Valpak is one of the leading direct marketing companies in the U.S. and Canada. We provide print and digital advertising through a network of 160 local franchises. From mailbox to mobile phone, Valpak brings exciting local business offers and opportunities to millions of consumers. Each month, our well-known Blue Envelope of savings is mailed to about 39 million demographically targeted households in 45 states and in four Canadian provinces. Our digital suite of products, including valpak.com, reaches more than 110 million users. Founded in 1968, Valpak is owned by Cox Target Media, a subsidiary of Cox Media Group in Atlanta.

Nutanix makes infrastructure invisible, elevating IT to focus on the applications and services that power their business. The Nutanix enterprise cloud platform leverages web-scale engineering and consumer-grade design to natively converge compute, virtualization, and storage into a resilient, software-defined solution with rich machine intelligence. The result is predictable performance, cloud-like infrastructure consumption, robust security, and seamless application mobility for a broad range of enterprise applications. Learn more at www.nutanix.com or follow us on Twitter@nutanix.