

From Nightmare Server Breakdowns to 100% Service Availability: How HCI Came to My Rescue

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We all have limits on our patience—how much we can tolerate before we say, “Enough!” When it comes to the amount of time that can be spent waiting on a product or a service to deliver its intended outcome, these limits to our patience apply to everyone. I like to describe this as our collective IQ—our “Irritation Quotient.”

Unlike the famed Intelligence Quotient (also known as IQ, of course), we in IT want our Irritation Quotient to be as low as possible. We want to largely keep irritants out of the daily lives of our end users.

The expectations of end users stem from their experience as consumers: Everything should be efficient and user-friendly. I have seen what happens when our end users’ limits get pushed to maximum levels, and I have seen the tremendous impact when we work to significantly reduce the Irritation Quotient.

Leading with Quality and Confidence for 100 Years

I come from an accounting and finance background and happened to whirl into the world of IT. I currently head IT for Huhtamaki’s India operations. [Huhtamaki](#) is a global, \$3 billion enterprise. We are leaders in India in the space of flexible packaging used for consumer goods like biscuits and snack foods, oil, and even coffee cups and lids. Huhtamaki has succeeded in the 100 years since it was founded in 1920 because we are driven to provide our customers with complete confidence in our products, from quality to delivery.

Prior to my tenure in IT at Huhtamaki, I spent more than a decade consulting for various customers across continents. When I got tired of traveling, I knew it was time to shift to the other side of the industry.

I used to sit with IT folks and hear their problems. I had a lot of ideas on how my experience could translate business needs into IT realities. The shift into an IT leadership role was a natural next step for me.

The Nightmare Production Server Breakdown That Started It All

On May 29, 2015, disaster struck at my previous organization. Our production server—running our ERP—unexpectedly started slowing down and quickly stopped functioning. With five different vendors contributing to its deployment, it was a nightmare cycle of vendor queries and escalations to regional offices. The outage lasted 60 hours. I didn’t leave my office building for three days as we tried to fix the issue. Naturally, our confidence in our system was shaken to

the core, and we decided to replace our complex, problematic solution.

When we started hunting for a solution, we wanted to reduce the number of vendors and minimize the components that go into building this whole architecture. The ideal would be an all-in-one solution, but we definitely had a target of cutting it down by at least half. We started by speaking to several OEMs. The usual names were there: Dell and HPE.

Between Dell and HPE, we had a dilemma of whom to choose. And then, all of a sudden, while we were doing our evaluations and research, my team member Hasan came up to me and said, "There's another company to look at—it's a startup. It's called [Nutanix](#). They do not operate in India, but I've seen their videos. I've read their research papers, I've seen their credentials, and it looks to be a great product. Why don't we go for it?"

It sounded absurd. An organization that does not exist in India, with no ecosystem and no partner resource in India?

He responded, "I'm not asking you to buy Nutanix. I'm asking you to evaluate it."

Making the Case for Nutanix

Mario, one of the salespeople from Nutanix, flew down from Amsterdam for a 30-minute meeting. That 30-minute meeting lasted for two and a half hours. He explained everything I wanted to know about Nutanix's architecture, roadmap, and vision.

Mario was a former CIO himself, and was so convinced about this product—the capabilities and value—that he quit his job to join Nutanix as their solution architect while they were in an early phase. He helped instill in me the strong faith that this was the product we had been searching for. At the end of that marathon meeting, I told him, "Done deal. Let's do business."

I was convinced, but I then had to explain to my management why they should go all-in on a product they had never heard of and that did not operate in India. The business case had to be air-tight and extremely clear.

Mario helped me build the business case using the right kind of non-tech business language, which I think was a key differentiating factor. We removed all jargons like uptime, availability, assurance of service, and hyperconverged infrastructure, and instead ensured the business case revolved around the key benefits Nutanix would bring to our business.

When making the case for a hyperconverged infrastructure, stick to business improvements—not technology. #NutanixStories

It was challenging, but I was able to convince my management to go for Nutanix. And there was no looking back after that.

Thankfully, Nutanix found a local partner who helped us in the entire implementation process. This was important, because I knew some installations can be wildly complex. Our partner said, "If I do not get this server up and running in 24 hours, you can have your money back."

And from the moment the partner started unboxing the server to getting it completely ready to use was just nine hours. You had to experience it to believe it. We ran our Microsoft Exchange email solution on Nutanix, which had more than 2,000 users accessing it. We were running a barcoding application, which was used for dispatching our goods. We were also running a weighbridge application, so whenever a vehicle would arrive at the factory, it had to be electronically weighed. All the applications that we were running on the Nutanix platform were mission-critical, and it was imperative that they wouldn't go down even for about five minutes. Thankfully, we never had a single problem.

Boosting Our Performance Outcomes While Lowering Our Collective "IQ"

That experience—and the impressive results Nutanix delivered—means I am still a Nutanix customer even though I have moved on to a different company. At Huhtamaki, I'm still running a critical application on Nutanix.

For example, we receive artwork inputs from our customers for printing. The artwork application runs on Nutanix. It's a web application where the artwork gets loaded, and the designers render files to be fed into the engraving machines. If they don't have the file to give to the engraver, we may have the world's best printer, but it's not going to work. If that application does not perform, I'm going to lose business. With Nutanix, I don't need to worry about that.

Mission-critical applications require reliable infrastructure.

#NutanixStories

Every designer is now more efficient and delivering more output. Under the previous infrastructure, our designers were constrained by the processing speed. They were only able to render about one job an hour. Our designers can now double that output. From our designers' perspective, they are much happier (and much less irritated) because of these performance improvements.

We have deployed Nutanix at Huhtamaki for over a year now, leveraging their AHV and Prism Central solutions, and we have seen some key performance improvements as a result:

- Power and deployment cost decreased by 85%
- Cost of infrastructure management decreased by 95%
- Employee performance improved by 4X
- Cost of infrastructure decreased by 40%

- Service availability is up to 100%

Before Nutanix, we had multiple vendors and I had to work on four different screens to provision everything into a single piece. With the Nutanix platform, we were able to reduce the provisioning of resources down to one single screen provided by Nutanix, called Prism Central. It cuts the entire workload for skilled resources into a single solution. Nutanix's hyperconverged infrastructure comes with compute, memory, storage, throughput, performance, and everything all in a single fused box. That eliminates the complexity of our architecture. And there is availability built in.

We now have a happy set of internal customers. They're now able to work without any complaints as far as their endpoint applications are concerned. Their irritation quotient has dropped significantly.

It takes a lot of passion and self-belief to deliver a good, innovative product. That's what Nutanix is. We are now planning to deploy Nutanix to more 30 locations across our operations, as we look to expand its use case for soon-to-be-established business units.

Standing Confident with a Low "IQ"

Since we implemented Nutanix, our internal confidence in this solution has skyrocketed, much like our return on investment. The overall business impact is highly positive, as our total cost of ownership analysis made so clear to us all.

But the sweetest part for me is knowing just how much Nutanix has lowered our Irritation Quotient, making Huhtamaki employees' lives so much easier. For the first time, a collectively low "IQ" at an organization gives us a competitive advantage. That's a low IQ that you will actually want to brag about.