

Think You Can't Afford Nutanix? Think Again: the Story of a Small Facility with Big Plans

by Tom Mockus

For so many organizations and individuals, a budget acts as a powerful bureaucrat affecting every decision they make. For an organization like Mount Desert Island (MDI) Hospital, the fear of high costs can be more of a barrier than the money itself.

Situated on Mount Desert Island, [MDI Hospital](#) is a small, critical-access hospital that's part of a collective of seven independent hospitals across Maine. We serve residents of Mount Desert Island as well as the residents of many other islands off the coast of Maine. As is the case with many small hospital facilities, we have older IT equipment that can be slow and unreliable. When a machine freezes, staff can't access electronic medical records (EMRs) and they have to resort to using the old school method of pens and paper. It's inefficient and frustrating for everyone.

When it comes to trying something new, the fear of high costs can be more of a barrier than the money itself. #NutanixStories

I should know—I spent the first part of my first career in Boston as a critical care nurse. I came to Maine to work as a critical care nurse, became the director of nursing, and then I decided to go into IT.

About five years ago, I became the IT department director at MDI Hospital. At the time, we had just signed a contract with SimpliVity OmniCube. The system worked fine, but it had its limits—and soon after we signed on, HPE acquired SimpliVity.

Our Outdated System Versus a Modern Solution

We bought four OmniCubes: three for production, and one for our disaster recovery (DR). As our infrastructure grew, we had to expand our production side.

When we asked OmniCube about the best way forward, we were told we needed a whole new design because they no longer supported our legacy infrastructure. This put us in a tight spot with both our infrastructure and our budget. We decided to take the OmniCube that we were using for DR and bring it

into production.

That solved one problem, but now we had no DR. As a temporary fix, we shifted our DR to the cloud until we could upgrade our infrastructure. At this point, we started thinking about which vendor and solution would be the best fit for our needs, because our current setup definitely wasn't.

From my first day as IT department director, I knew what I wanted: [Nutanix](#). Having seen their demos and spoken with their reps at conferences, I continued to follow them for years and keep up to date on their new features and releases. I wasn't the only one who loved [Nutanix](#); a couple of my colleagues liked what they saw as well and were impressed with the intuitive dashboard.

At first, the timing was terrible. When I first joined IT in 2016 we weren't in the position to pursue Nutanix because we had just signed on with SimpliVity. There was no way I could've asked the board for more money to adopt yet another solution.

Over the years, OmniCube's limitations became increasingly frustrating and our service levels continued to decline. But when it was finally the right time to seek out a new vendor with another solution, we had a seemingly new challenge: the cost.

The Problem of Perception

We spoke to a lot of people about Nutanix, and just about everyone told us that Nutanix was beyond our budget. Our third-party administrator repeatedly told us that Nutanix would be too expensive for a small hospital like MDI. We also spoke with other third-party vendors, one of which told us that Nutanix would cost \$750,000, while an OmniCube system overhaul would cost a little less than \$500,000.

But with no DR plan and the clock running out on our OmniCube support, we couldn't rely on hearsay any more. We dug deeper into our options ourselves. I got on a call with Nutanix and [XenTegra](#), a third-party vendor that helps us with our infrastructure. We walked through the solution together, and got a hard number for the total cost.

My initial reaction was disbelief. I thought we had to be missing something, because it was much less expensive than everyone said it would be. Ultimately, Nutanix ended up being less than we were paying for SimpliVity.

Speak directly to #IT solutions providers when doing your research. You get more accurate information—and could save money and time in the process.

[#NutanixStories](#)

I was completely shocked. We could've implemented Nutanix years ago, but were turned off by so many different voices telling us it would be too expensive. If we had investigated further and spoke with Nutanix directly, we would've gotten more accurate information—and saved more money and time in the process.

Armed with this new information, I made the case for Nutanix, and it was approved.

Smoother, More Reliable Workflows

We began our Nutanix migration in September 2020. Within two months, we moved about half of our infrastructure to Nutanix and we are on track to complete the transition by the end of December 2020.

As with any new system, there is a learning curve. Our administrators had to learn the ins and outs of Nutanix before we could start the migration, so we've had virtual meetings with Nutanix engineers as part of our training. Every step of the way, Nutanix has provided us with amazing support.

The user experience has improved as well. As a former nurse, I know firsthand the importance of a fast, simple system. We've already noticed that everything runs much faster. MDI Hospital has 575 employees and our end users are telling us that their workflow experience is better. We hope this will have a ripple effect on everything, especially access to our EMRs, where most of our staff spend most of their time.

One of the first things we did when migrating over to Nutanix was to implement a Citrix virtual desktop environment (VDI) on Nutanix. We still have a lot of old, slow equipment, so using a VDI eliminates that issue for our users. No more pens and paper for our nurses—their workdays got a lot more efficient.

The Difference Between Cost and Value

In 2019, I worried about not having a functional DR plan, being at full capacity, and being unsupported throughout it all. In one fell swoop, Nutanix solved all of that.

I feel like we have a true partner in Nutanix. I know and like our reps, who reach out to me regularly to check in on our status and progress. I've never had that before, and it makes a huge difference when it comes to my confidence in our solution.

Our provider-customer relationship is different now, too. Before, we received a piece of equipment and we were left to figure out everything on our own. Sometimes that works out just fine, but we needed more support, especially as our equipment was being phased out.

We're new at this, and we still have lots of questions. When we experience a glitch, we hear back from Nutanix immediately. These aren't elevated or emergency tickets, either—these are small issues, yet they're treated with urgency because Nutanix understands that the healthcare services that we provide are important to our community.

It's difficult to explain how transformative this process has been for us. We knew Nutanix was far better than its competitors and the fact that it's actually less expensive means we're getting a much higher return on investment than we thought possible. Knowing that we could've had Nutanix in place a couple years ago, but that we didn't pursue it because we assumed it was unaffordable, is mind-boggling.

You Deserve the Truth

We've learned an important lesson in all this: don't rely solely on what others tell you. Go to the source and investigate for yourself. There's no need for anyone to sweat through capacity issues or a lack of DR options like we did.

We were speeding down a dead end road, and Nutanix turned our car around. Now, we can go in any direction we want. We're ready and excited to explore even more Nutanix solutions, such as [Nutanix Files](#). We currently have all our files on our internal network, and it would be great to move more items to the cloud.

Do you feel like your organization is speeding down a dead end road? The right #IT infrastructure can turn your car around. #NutanixStories

I'm absolutely going to spread the word about Nutanix, particularly to our hospital collective. These hospitals have similar challenges as we do, and many are under the same assumption that Nutanix is beyond their budgets. It's not, and that discovery was one of the best things that could've happened to us.

If Nutanix can make such a big difference for us, it can do so for anyone. But you don't have to take my word for it—do your own research and discover the truth for yourself.