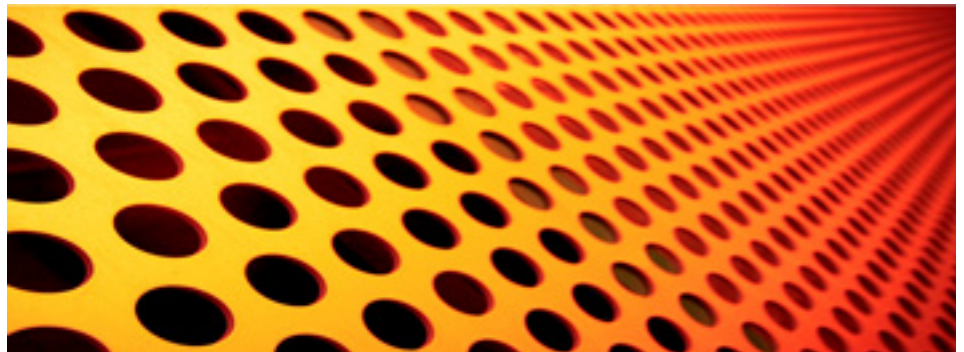


Managed Service Provider GridSouth Selects Nexenta Over GreenBytes and Others for Managed Storage Growth, Simplicity, Performance



Key Highlights

Industry: Service Provider

Challenge:

- Storage capacity
- Access
- Cost-effective hardware
- Ability to replace disks without replacing hardware
- Needed unified storage solution and centralized management console
- iSCSI to support block storage

Solution: NexentaStor 3.0.5

Benefits:

- Easy to implement growth plan
- Bottom line ROI saves about 70% over legacy solution
- Increased performance
- Improved data back-up and recovery
- Hardware-agnostic solutions allow company to leverage existing machinery

Business Overview

GridSouth Networks, LLC, a privately-owned Managed Service Provider, delivers high-capacity, high-performance grid networking, including 100 and 1000 Mbps Internet service, VMware vSphere Hosting, and managed Web hosting. GridSouth's product and service offerings are designed and built around the philosophy of over-engineering, which leads to unsurpassed network reliability, resiliency, and, ultimately, extremely satisfied customers. Over-engineering includes fully redundant data centers, active standby equipment, and technical expertise to deliver cost-effective service plans with uncompromising results.

Challenges

GridSouth was facing similar concerns of many fast growing companies. They were facing a significant demand for storage and the equipment on-hand would not fulfill expanding requirements—storage capacity, access, and cost-effective hardware.

The company realized that on-hand storage infrastructure would not meet capacity demands or last long enough. Hardware was expected to last 3-5 years, with disks needing replacement even before that. GridSouth wanted a storage solution that would allow them to replace disks without replacing the existing hardware.

Prior to the 4.0 ESX release, there was a limitation on LUN size. With GridSouth hosting hundreds of virtual machines, an easy to use, low-cost storage solution was essential.

GridSouth needed a unified storage solution, one that had iSCSI, NFS, and CIFS support. The company also wanted one centralized management console from which to drive the entire storage solution. In addition, the solution had to run iSCSI to support block storage.

GridSouth's existing backup solutions could not provide easy data access or offer site-to-site replication.

“Once we implemented virtualization into our IT infrastructure, it forced us to reconsider our storage options. EMC, NetApp, Openfiler, FreeNAS, and OpenSolaris were too expensive or provided no flexibility in hardware. NexentaStor was, by far, the best solution out there, providing the enterprise features we needed.”

—Jim Nitterauer, CEO, GridSouth Networks

Cost also was a major issue. And the company was getting fed up with vendors radically overcharging for essential commodity items. (GreenBytes wanted to charge GridSouth \$2,500 for a \$500 10G Ethernet card.)

Solution

After researching the market, and taking into account expected company growth, GridSouth knew it wanted to go with ZFS technology, as it was the best storage file system available. And as to performance, when compared to GreenBytes that had an SSD, Nexenta performed the same or better, at a much lower cost (even without SSDs on Nexenta).

GridSouth also looked at Openfiler, FreeNAS, and OpenSolaris but found that all of these solutions came with a much higher, long-term, associated cost than the Nexenta solution, which provided the best price to performance ratio—about \$500 per terabyte.

GridSouth’s solution includes two Aberdeen disk controllers, thirty-two 3 ½” 1TB 3 Gbps SATA drives for a total of 32TB of raw capacity. In addition, there are two mirrored physical controllers, two mirrored 1TB drives write cache (ZIL), and two mirrored 1TB inactive drives reserved for read cache (performance found to be better without the read cache). GridSouth now is running 78 VMs, 20 which are templates, on the Nexenta solution.

Business Benefits

Implementation of NexentaStor, based on ZFS technology, led to improved performance for GridSouth’s Web hosting business. The new Web interface allowed for non-IT personnel, without extensive training, to activate the system, as it is intuitive and easy to use.

Data volumes are better segmented (by customer, by purpose), allowing for better access and greater productivity.

Easier Growth Path: With NexentaStor, the company was able to blueprint its growth path, allocating fewer resources and equipment than would be needed with a legacy system. Starting small and expanding, as needed, fulfilled a major, long-term corporate concern. Needing to create a LUN for hundreds of VMs, GridSouth recognized that NexentaStor has no LUN size limitations.

Bottom Line ROI: The Nexenta solution saved GridSouth both time and money. It provided an easier-to-use solution than all competitors, along with extensive savings (up to 70% less cost than legacy systems).

Nexenta helped GridSouth maximize return on its storage investment with increased performance, improved data back-up and recovery, and hardware-agnostic solutions, thereby allowing the company to leverage existing in-house machinery.

System Configuration

- NexentaStor 3.0.5
- Aberdeen SAN w/ 36-1 TB Seagate 3.5” SATA
- w/ 3 GBps
- 2x Areca 1261 Controllers
- 2x Intel Xeon Processors, 32 GB RAM



Nexenta Systems is the leading supplier of enterprise-class OpenStorage solutions. Its flagship software-only platform, NexentaStor, delivers high-performance, ultra-scalable, cloud- and virtualization-optimized storage solutions.

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