Replacing On-Premises File Servers With Cloud Applications

Why Four Companies Moved to Egnyte for a Modern File Solution in the Cloud

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INTRODUCTION

File servers have fulfilled a vital role in networking infrastructure for decades. Microsoft's Windows File Server first appeared in the early 90's as a way for networked desktop machines to share files without managing physical disks. Over the years, these on-premises file solutions matured to address cost, availability, and performance requirements with additional features and architectures such as RAID, NAS, and SAN. However, today's legacy file server technology has become obsolete (which this paper will explore below), forcing IT teams to consider ditching their old local file servers and replacing them with new, cloud file solutions.

Common Challenges with Legacy File Server Technology

The primary reason companies consider retiring their local file server technology is cost. This can be broken down into several areas - licensing costs, which can be anywhere from $25 per month to over $100 per month for a Windows Server, and hardware costs, which range from $1000 to $4000 for a moderately-sized, small business file server. This means that an on-premises file solution can cost anywhere from $1300 to $5000 for the first year alone. And that's not including any indirect costs, such as routine configuration updates, patching and troubleshooting that often require a dedicated administrator. Plus, if you need to provide for remote file access, you'll also carry the costs of additional VPN services.

Finally, depending on your industry, you may incur additional costs for solutions to manage and safeguard regulated data. For example, if your file server stores credit card information, it must comply with PCI-DSS requirements or if it stores healthcare records, it must comply with HIPAA. In fact, if it stores any customer data, it will probably need to comply with local privacy regulations. Data regulations govern not only how the system is configured, but also its ability to generate appropriate reports and respond to special requests.

Beyond costs, there are basic functional issues with legacy file servers that pose challenges both to IT and end users of the system.

FILE RECOVERY

In order to recover a deleted or damaged file, users must ask for help from IT, as they cannot self-recover. During periods of intense business activity, these urgent IT requests can burden administrators and distract them from other duties. Compounding the issue is limited version control on legacy file servers. While it may be possible to restore an old version from backup, historical versions may no longer exist.

FILE RETENTION AND MANAGEMENT

An administrator on a legacy file server has limited tools with which to implement retention policies. Typically, files older than a certain date are archived. However, if there is a company or industry retention policy requiring certain files be kept on the system, they must be stored in a designated folder as exceptions - a manual process for administrators. Likewise, legal hold and data privacy requests require the administrator to manually search for, organize and protect files and folders, which often result in errors.

SEARCH

Limited on legacy file servers, a typical simple string search results in hundreds (or thousands) of hits to sort through. While IT can deploy simple file extension filters, there is typically no advanced search filters such as file creation date, last modified date and who modified it, resulting in user frustration and business inefficiency.

Common Concerns with Cloud-Based File Solutions

Even with all the challenges with legacy file servers, moving work files to the cloud is not comfortable for many IT teams. There are often questions about security, compliance, and access. However, the longer you wait, the greater likelihood of employees finding workarounds for easier file access by using personal Google Drive, Box, or OneDrive accounts - creating unnecessary complexity and sprawl of content across your organization.

We've dispelled some common misconceptions about cloud-based file solutions below.

Will my data be as secure in the cloud as it is on my own server?

Properly engineered and deployed cloud systems are in fact more secure than a server you can build yourself. That's because large cloud providers have hundreds of engineers working to validate and verify configurations against all types of attacks before they are put into service. More importantly, cloud-based systems are constantly monitored by many advanced security tools to verify and maintain integrity. And your data is fully protected with encryption, both in-flight and at-rest.

Will I always be able to get to my data when and where I need it?

Cloud-based service providers handle the complexity of automatically distributing snapshots of your data across dozens of physical locations behind the scenes. Therefore, you don't have to worry about complex RAID redundancy and off-premises backups anymore. In addition to data redundancy, the networks accessing these systems are also massively redundant and managed 24x7. As a result, your data will have better up-time than you can match with a physical server.

Will it be difficult to copy and replicate all my files, folders, and permissions to the cloud?

Most customers are surprised at how easy a migration to a cloud-based system is. Automated tools scan the data, manage the migration, and replicate many terabytes of data in the cloud, including files, folder and permission structures quickly and easily.

Will a cloud-based file system slow down access for my users?

The cloud provider uses enormous bandwidth back-bone links, so latency is never an issue. The only constraint could be the internet connection to your local ISP. However, users typically don't see a degradation in performance at all with a typical ISP link of 200MB/s or more. That's because cloud-based systems are designed to optimize scarce bandwidth and perform well even in degraded conditions. There are also cloud-based file solutions that provide features that further reduce the need for bandwidth and support file access in remote locations.

Will my users have to go through training to learn a new system?

To reduce disruption to your users and their workflows, you'll want to choose a cloud-based file system that can provide a "drive letter" experience for your users. This means the cloud-based system fully emulates a local drive common to on-premises file servers in every way, so users and applications which use drive letter access will not notice a difference.

Will I have to dedicate IT resources for cloud management?

Managing cloud-based deployments is often much simpler and easier than managing a local Windows File server. With a well-designed cloud-based file system, default configurations work well, and online tools and wizards walk you through new screens and features. To relieve the burden on your IT team even more, you'll want to choose a file system that allows you to delegate many of the permissions decisions to department managers.

Will a cloud-based file server meet my regulatory compliance needs?

Because cloud-based services must address the needs of thousands of customers, almost every regulatory and compliance scenario has already been addressed. In fact, you'll find it easier to meet compliance requirements with built-in policy tools and reporting tools. For example, you'll be able to comply with privacy regulations by not only finding all sensitive personal information but also demonstrating that it is protected. A good cloud storage system will enable you to automate much of the response to Data Subject Access Requests (DSAR), and are supported by advanced reporting tools that provide information on all file and user events in the system.

Moving Legacy File Servers to Egnyte's Cloud File Solution

Thousands of customers have chosen Egnyte's cloud solution to replace their on-premises file servers. Egnyte provides documented cost savings in the first year, while establishing a foundation for quick and easy scalability as companies grow and expand. IT teams benefit from simpler administration, file system-like controls and performance, and enhanced data security. While users benefit from an intuitive "drive letter" experience and VPN-less file access and external sharing. **Here are 4 companies that have seen great success moving their legacy file solutions to Egnyte:**

GBBN

Architectural design firm, GBBN Architects employed legacy on-premises storage devices which were aging and running out of support. In a search for new solutions, it was critical that their employees be able to easily locate, share, and edit working design files, especially with external partners.

Egnyte provided immediate value in the area of search. For example, when a user reported a project folder missing, it would take days to search through terabytes of data using the antiquated tools on their legacy system. With Egnyte, they could locate missing data quickly.

Collaboration with external partners was streamlined as Egnyte eliminated the need for dedicated VPNs to share documents externally. Partners are added to a templated project folder and have full access to the working project documents they need, whether working from the job site or the office. IT can now more effectively manage documents shared with partners and reduce the exposure of valuable design files.

Barnhill Contracting

Commercial builder, Barnhill Contracting, chose Egnyte because of its integration with Procore which provided the ability to collaborate in real-time on large drawing files. These files needed to be accessible, even to teams working in the field, who previously burned CDs to carry files with them. The integration of Procore with Egnyte meant that they could store files in Egnyte, which synchronize with Procore storage in the background, making files equally accessible through Egnyte from the office and the field. Most importantly, this synchronization of content provided a single-source-of-truth for critical drawing files for all teams.

ThinkSo

Creative design agency, ThinkSo, faced a big challenge as they shifted their employees to a remote work setup. A local server had been housing all its intellectual property, but it had long passed its life expectancy and the company's designers and project managers were frustrated by the painfully slow transfer times. Complicating things further were fragmented file locations across the company, with certain file types stored on Google Drive and others on the local server. This made collaboration difficult and inefficient—a major problem for a company where multiple people in different roles work together on one project simultaneously.

Thinkso chose Egnyte as a unified location to store all information for a project, facilitating collaboration amongst teams and moving projects along more quickly. Users can now share and co-edit design files for complex projects easily and quickly, without time-consuming training or onboarding. And confidential client files are much more secure thanks to Egnyte's ability to monitor and control sharing and access of sensitive content.

Southstar Bank

Southstar Bank choose Egnyte to replace its on-premises file servers in order to better control and manage sensitive information provided by their customers. Their existing solution could not provide visibility into where sensitive information was located and who had access to it, so the IT team employed multiple tools and manual monitoring methods to ensure that sensitive customer information was stored properly and protected.

With Egnyte, Southstar Bank was able to automate the discovery and management of sensitive information, enabling them to reduce the number of improperly located sensitive files from 20,000 to zero within days. Migration to the new system was quick and easy, and Southstar Bank reduced direct annual spend of file solutions by $10,000. Users appreciate the fact that they have familiar drive-letter access to files, and can now share links rather than attachments in emails, which enable a more productive workforce.

SUMMARY

Egnyte saves money, is more secure, and provides better collaboration capabilities than a traditional file server, making users more productive and efficient. IT teams appreciate the ease of file administration and powerful security and governance features, along with Egnyte's fast and easy migration. If you'd like to see the product itself, you can access Egnyte's product tours, which provide short walk-throughs of key features and functions. If you'd like to try it yourself, register for a free 15 day trial.