Success Story

ACNielsen ORG-MARG Boosts Operational Efficiency with NetApp Unified Storage Solution

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
Services

The challenge
Improve efficiency, manageability, and scalability of a distributed storage infrastructure and enable a multisite disaster recovery strategy for critical intellectual property.

The solution
Consolidate Microsoft® Exchange, SQL Server®, and Oracle® Database storage across six locations on NetApp® unified storage.

Benefits
• Reliable data management/recovery
• Significant cost savings
• High scalability
• Unmatched business continuity

CUSTOMER PROFILE
ACNielsen (www.acnielsen.com) is the world’s leading provider of market research, information, and analysis to the consumer products and services industries, as well as to government and social services. More than 9,000 clients in some 100 countries rely on ACNielsen’s dedicated professionals to measure competitive marketplace dynamics, to understand consumer attitudes and behavior, and to develop advanced analytical insights that increase sales and profits.

ACNielsen in India (www.acnielsen.co.in) operates under the dual brands of ACNielsen for retail measurement services and ACNielsen ORG-MARG for customized research services. The company’s service portfolio includes retail measurement, consumer panel research, and customized research. ACNielsen ORG-MARG employs more than 800 market research professionals based in six branch offices in Baroda, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Bangalore. The company is also present in some 100 field locations across the country, with more than 850 research investigators operating from these offices.

THE CHALLENGE
Make sure of seamless, enterprise-wide data management and storage efficiencies

Data accessibility, storage, and retrieval are the key elements of the ACNielsen ORG-MARG business model. The company’s range of services across multiple industry verticals results in a high and continuous data churn. Exposure to business risks because of inherent data and information shortcomings is unacceptable. Thus, for ACNielsen, maintaining high levels of data integrity and performance along with seamless business continuity and customer service becomes paramount.

“We are in the business of collecting, processing, and analyzing data and then customizing it in different formats for customers. Our input, product, and indeed our intellectual property are data,” says Bhushan Akerkar, executive director, IST, South Asia, ACNielsen ORG-MARG Private Limited. “Our business model relies heavily on reliable access to data. If we do not have continuous availability of information, storage, and security, the impact on our business is immediate.”
“The hypercompetitive and fast-turnaround nature of our business made us look at NetApp advanced storage solutions to shore up our operational efficiencies.”

Bhushan Akerkar  
Executive Director, IST, South Asia, ACNielsen ORG-MARG

“Increased business opportunities for ACNielsen ORG-MARG in turn generate large volumes of data that must be managed efficiently. Given our market presence across locations and our growth rate, the existing direct-attached storage configurations were non scalable, unreliable, and costly to operate,” continues Chetan Shah, associate director, IST, ACNielsen ORG-MARG. “The volume of work also increased, and a lot more data had to be stored and retrieved. Underutilization of storage resources and the need to implement disaster recovery to efficiently manage the IT infrastructure were some of the major challenges that we were looking to address through an advanced and alternative storage solution.”

The evaluation parameters hinged on scalability and resource characteristics of the solution. Elaborates Akerkar, “Since our requirements were unique, we had a rigorous six-month evaluation phase. The conceptual framework of the solution revolved around creating a centralized database that could be replicated and accessed all across India. The hypercompetitive and fast-turnaround nature of our business made us look at NetApp advanced storage solutions to shore up our operational efficiencies. We zeroed in on NetApp because the solution supported a wide range of applications using different protocols. Further, the solution was easy to upgrade, and disaster recovery systems could be implemented easily.”

Concurs Shah, “NetApp had the edge because of its capability in providing a combined storage and disaster recovery solution and flawless interoperability with various protocols. Further, NetApp also had its own OS for applications and other tasks as compared to the competitive solutions, which were running on Windows® storage servers.”

THE SOLUTION
Implement multisite solution built on NetApp unified storage
Today, a NetApp unified storage solution strengthens the ACNielsen ORG-MARG IT infrastructure. Implemented at six key locations, the NetApp architecture includes two NetApp FAS270 systems, each configured with 3TB of storage (deployed at the Mumbai and Baroda branch offices) and five NetApp FAS250 systems configured with 1TB each (one system deployed at each of the Chennai, Delhi, and Kolkata offices and two systems implemented at Bangalore). The NetApp solution provides integrated support for NFS, CIFS, and iSCSI protocols. NetApp SnapMirror software enables rapid mirroring of mission-critical application data between sites.

Other third-party hardware and software products used in conjunction with the NetApp solution include Microsoft SQL Server 2000, Microsoft Exchange, Oracle® for Windows, and RMS Factory.

“There are six key locations, of which Baroda is the central data processing hub for the RMS division,” elaborates Akerkar. “The data processing application, Retail Factory, runs on an Oracle platform. The total volume of data stored on the system is approximately 300GB with monthly updates.”

BUSINESS BENEFITS
Operational efficiencies, security of critical data
NetApp has enabled higher data management and storage levels at ACNielsen ORG-MARG. Backup processes are now simpler and more reliable. Affirms Akerkar, “Prior to the NetApp implementation, we struggled with backups and data recovery. Now, thanks to advanced applications such as NetApp SnapMirror, data availability and data recovery of mission-critical applications are expedited efficiently. Clearly, we have saved enormous amounts on administrative costs.”
NetApp helps make sure that AC Nielsen ORG-MARG operates efficiently and effectively in line with its aggressive business goals. File sharing, database, and messaging applications that are critical to enterprise operations are supported by the reliability, performance, and scalability of the NetApp systems.

**Lower total cost of ownership**

"More importantly, top management feels that critical data is secure," says Akerkar. "The total cost of ownership is also lower. Hitherto, transfer of data between different locations used to be done on CDs by courier. Today, thanks to a leased line and NetApp storage solutions such as SnapMirror, data transfer times have been reduced considerably."

A buoyant business environment is putting ACNielsen ORG-MARG at the threshold of rapid growth. In order to stay on its aggressive growth path, plans include utilizing more NetApp products. Says Akerkar, "The relationship we have with NetApp has truly strengthened our competitive advantage and customer fulfillment levels."

**SOLUTION COMPONENTS**

**NetApp products**
- NetApp FAS270 and FAS250 systems
- NetApp SnapMirror software

**Protocols**
- NFS, CIFS, iSCSI

**Environment**
- Applications: Microsoft SQL Server 2000, Microsoft Exchange, Oracle8i for Windows, and RMS Factory
- Operating systems: Microsoft Windows