Success Story

Apptix Saves More Than $1 Million with NetApp Storage Efficiencies

Customer Profile
Apptix is a premier provider of hosted business communication, collaboration, compliance and security, and infrastructure solutions to businesses of all sizes, with particular expertise supporting legal, financial, healthcare, and telecommunications firms. Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, Apptix has been in operation for over a decade and currently serves more than 350,000 users around the world.

The Challenge
Delivering advanced communication and collaboration services
Apptix is known for delivering reliable, easy-to-manage hosted services that help customers reduce expenses while improving their operations. The company’s flagship cloud-based communication and collaboration services based on Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint® solutions help companies stay connected anywhere, anytime. To remain competitive in the crowded hosted service market, Apptix must deliver its cloud services from a cost-effective infrastructure that enables high-availability, high-performance business solutions.

Benefits
- Decreased TCO by 60%, saving more than $1 million in IT expenditures
- Reduced storage in the Microsoft Exchange 2010 environment by 75%
- Reduced storage management time by 66%

The storage platform supporting the company’s Microsoft Exchange 2007 and Microsoft SharePoint 2007 environments had reached capacity. The platform lacked the scalability and manageability needed to migrate customers to Microsoft Exchange 2010 and Microsoft SharePoint 2010, and to expand its offerings with a virtual desktop service. With more than 300,000 Microsoft Exchange users depending on Apptix hosted communications, tight integration between its storage platform and Microsoft Exchange is vital to meeting stringent service-level agreements (SLAs).

Apptix needed a storage solution with the flexibility to efficiently roll out its services to new customers and help optimize storage resources as its services and customer base grow. “We were ready to move beyond the limitations and inefficiencies of our previous storage environment,” says Brian Nesbit, director of Engineering, Research, and Development at Apptix.

The company worked closely with ePlus, a technology solutions provider and NetApp Star Partner, to find a robust, seamless, unified platform for managing physical and virtual resources. It also
“NetApp data storage and management allow us to take full advantage of the Microsoft Exchange 2010 database availability while consuming 75% less total storage than our previous storage solution. As a result, we are able to offer our customers twice the level of data redundancy while decreasing our total cost of ownership by 60% and saving over $1M in 2011 alone.”

Shane Smith
Senior Vice President, Information Technology, Apptix, Inc.

required a network-attached storage (NAS) solution with NFS and CIFS protocol support to help simplify Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint data management and improve reliability and availability. Apptix selected NetApp storage to support its Microsoft Exchange 2010, Microsoft SharePoint 2010, and virtual desktop environments.

The Solution
A seamless, integrated storage platform
Apptix supports its communication and collaboration services with NetApp FAS3270 storage systems both in its primary data center in Texas and in its disaster recovery site in Florida. The company leverages FAS3210 and FAS3140 storage systems in its lab environment. NetApp Data ONTAP® 8.0 software provides a flexible unified architecture that supports Apptix’s multiprotocol, multi-tenant requirements in a common platform with common software. The FAS3270 offers native support for all key NAS and storage-area network (SAN) protocols, including iSCSI, Fibre Channel, NFS, and CIFS. This gives Apptix the flexibility to consolidate its mixed IT environment on NetApp and optimize the value of other IT investments.

“Unlike other storage solutions I’ve worked with, NetApp offers seamless technologies that offer a breadth of protocols backed by industry-leading value-added functionality enhancements—all without sacrificing ease of management,” says Nesbit. “Once a storage manager uses a NetApp product, [he or she] can quickly leverage those skills for other NetApp products and gain maximum value from the NetApp solutions.”

The company delivers its Microsoft Exchange 2010 and Microsoft SharePoint 2010 hosted collaboration and communication services to customers and its corporate staff on NetApp storage. The cloud solutions on NetApp include an enterprise-class e-mail service with advanced calendaring, task, and contact capabilities, with the scalability to fit any size business. The hosted collaboration and content management solution on NetApp offers customers secure document sharing and workflows. Leveraging best-in-class technology housed in SAS 70/SSAE 16-compliant data centers, Apptix delivers its cloud solutions over a highly reliable network, and backs its services with 24/7 customer support. Apptix optimizes NetApp storage system performance and improves the customer experience with the NetApp Virtual Storage Tier driven by 512GB NetApp Flash Cache cards in its FAS3270 storage systems. The company leverages the Virtual Storage Tier—with its intelligent caching and NetApp storage efficiency technologies—for its Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint workloads. The Virtual Storage Tier provides Apptix with the ability to increase I/O per second (IOPS), storage efficiency, and the number of Microsoft Exchange 2010 mailboxes supported. Apptix achieves additional efficiencies using NetApp deduplication, which enables the company to reduce storage requirements in its Microsoft environments by 40% to 50%.

From a central console, OnCommand™ Unified Manager offers a complete view into NetApp storage resources. The Apptix IT team manages and monitors its storage, with detailed reports on utilization and trend information to assist with capacity planning. NetApp MultiStore® software provides Apptix with secure multi-tenancy for its growing business communication and collaboration customers, with the ability to host thousands of customers on a single, integrated NetApp storage platform.

SnapManager® for Microsoft Exchange Server helps Apptix automate complex, time-consuming processes associated with the backup, recovery, and verification of its Microsoft Exchange Server databases. The company protects valuable customer data with NetApp capabilities such as Single Mailbox Recovery, which provides new revenue streams for Apptix as a fee-based service.
The company can recover and restore individual mailboxes, e-mail messages and attachments, calendar items, deleted items, and contacts in minutes. Appxtix combines NetApp data protection with disaster recovery capabilities from Microsoft Exchange Server 2010, which provides database-level failover and replication to the disaster recovery site.

**Business Benefits**

**Better performance at reduced costs**

By consolidating on NetApp storage and taking advantage of efficiencies with the Virtual Storage Tier, Appxtix has reduced its storage footprint and total cost of ownership. The Virtual Storage Tier reduces Appxtix’s storage, power, and rack-space costs and increases storage utilization by optimizing the performance of random read–intensive Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint workloads. With intelligent caching rather than traditional automated storage tiering, Appxtix benefits from increased IOPS, without needing to add more hard disk drives or increase storage management complexity. “Our customers such as healthcare and financial institutions depend on continuous high performance in their Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint environments,” emphasizes Nesbit. “By optimizing I/O data requests for performance as well as cost, the NetApp Virtual Storage Tier supports us in providing our customers always-on services while offering us a more dynamic, cost-effective infrastructure.” Appxtix’s advanced service delivery network is backed by a 100%-guaranteed-uptime SLA.

**Managing storage as a unified set of services**

From a single NetApp console, Appxtix storage managers can view the entire NetApp FAS3200 and FAS3100 series storage infrastructure as a single pool of storage and unified set of services. OnCommand Unified Manager with the Operations Manager console offers Appxtix the visibility needed to optimize NetApp storage and reduce overall IT spend by utilizing storage resources more efficiently.

NetApp MultiStore provides additional management capabilities and opportunities to improve storage efficiency. With MultiStore, Appxtix can consolidate file servers and streamline data migration, which increases staff productivity and reduces costs. The partitioned, multi-tenant environment provides Appxtix customers with the utmost security and privacy. MultiStore offers Appxtix a shared storage infrastructure that is highly responsive, easy to manage, and cost-effective to deploy, and allows the company to quickly roll out services to new customers.

Just as the Appxtix cloud delivery model reduces capex and opex costs for its customers, NetApp manageability and efficiency capabilities such as deduplication enable Appxtix to significantly reduce its storage hardware and operational costs. The IT staff manages its 60TB of NetApp storage with the equivalent of one-fourth of a full-time employee. “NetApp data storage and management allow us to take full advantage of the Microsoft Exchange 2010 database availability while consuming 75% less total storage than our previous storage solution. As a result, we are able to offer our customers twice the level of data redundancy while decreasing our total cost of ownership by 60% and saving over $1M in 2011 alone,” says Shane Smith, senior vice president of Information Technology at Appxtix. “We’re able to invest the money saved into positioning our company for unprecedented growth.”

**Responding to today’s and tomorrow’s needs**

The NetApp FAS3200 series storage system helps Appxtix optimize its IT budget, reduce risk, and scale for growth. The midrange storage system provides Appxtix with a cost-effective environment for mixed workloads that protects the company’s investment through its inherent scalability. The FAS3200 series storage system further

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**Figure 1** Appxtix storage infrastructure.

Appxtix optimizes NetApp storage system performance and improves the customer experience with the NetApp Virtual Storage Tier driven by 512GB NetApp Flash Cache cards in its FAS3270 storage systems.
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Brian Nesbit
Director of Engineering, Research and Development, Apptix, Inc.

enhances the high-availability NetApp architecture by enabling additional diagnostics and nondisruptive recovery.

“The superior processing power of the FAS3200 series system, combined with the optimal number of shelves and slots, enables us to effectively deliver our cloud services to our customer base while spreading out fewer customers across more clusters to reduce service risk,” says Nesbit. “Just as important, the system scales to several petabytes. With plans to continue to migrate Hosted Exchange customers to Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 on NetApp and to launch our virtual desktop service from NetApp, we are well positioned to grow and to respond to future opportunities in the cloud services market.”

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

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Third-Party Products

Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010