



NetApp®

Success Story

An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Benefits with NetApp Fitness Preventive Care



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
Technology

The Challenge
Maximize uptime for enterprise storage through proactive storage support.

The Solution
Institutionalize proactive support and use the My AutoSupport™ tool, a complimentary proprietary tool of the NetApp Customer Fitness™ program that analyzes a company's storage infrastructure and makes proactive support recommendations.

Benefits

- 90% drop in priority-1 (P1) issues
- 800 staff hours per year in issue remediation eliminated
- 160 staff hours per year saved by automating storage inventory

Customer Profile

NetApp creates innovative storage and data management solutions that deliver outstanding cost efficiency and accelerate business breakthroughs. NetApp is a Fortune 500 company employing more than 12,000 people in 131 offices around the world. Internal corporate IT services are administered at NetApp by a team of about 500 people operating an infrastructure that includes 3,900 servers across 7 global data centers.

The Challenge

Over the past 20 years, NetApp has grown from a Silicon Valley startup to a global Fortune 500 company with more than \$6.3 billion in revenue. As the company grew, the infrastructure required to support global business operations evolved rapidly. New applications and systems were provisioned as quickly as possible to keep pace with the expanding business.

Over time, this situation led to an architecture consisting of many different legacy hardware models and outdated versions of the NetApp® Data ONTAP® storage operating system. This introduced some operational problems and inefficiencies into daily IT operations.

The internal storage team wanted to change from a reactive to a proactive mindset by implementing a system of regular system upgrades, patching, and maintenance. They sought to maximize operational efficiencies and system uptime.

The Solution

Building a proactive mindset

The IT team had a new set of resources to draw from: NetApp Customer Fitness, a storage preventive-care program for achieving optimal storage performance and eliminating unplanned downtime. The foundation of the program is a new mindset—a change in people and processes. “We needed to institutionalize proactivity,” says Michael Morris, director of NetApp’s IT Customer-1 Services.

About a year ago, when Morris took charge of the storage team, he wanted storage engineers to have more time to focus on proactive maintenance. He divided the storage team into service lines and assigned each line to an engineer. “One engineer has responsibility for data protection, another for storage performance and capacity, another for storage software, another for hardware, and so on,” Morris says.

“There has been a 90% reduction in P1 support cases and our internal customers are happy because our uptime has increased.”

Pridhvi Appineni

IT Storage Services Team Manager, NetApp

Morris made it clear to the team that proactive maintenance was a priority and that if an operations incident occurred, only the operations team should handle the ticket. “If a system has an outage, I don’t want service-line owners to spend time working on it,” he says. “I want them to drive proactive maintenance for their service line instead, and write the processes that the operations team should follow to fix things if they break.”

Setting proactive priorities automatically

A challenge in conducting proactive maintenance is to identify which tasks are most important to work on. This is made easier by My AutoSupport, a NetApp Fitness™ tool that is complimentary for NetApp customers and partners. The My AutoSupport tool takes inventory of every storage controller in a given environment. It continuously checks on health and identifies risks for a particular system by drawing on a database of NetApp customer experience from around the world.

Results appear in My AutoSupport, a personalized, secure web portal that recommends which conditions in a customer’s system should be addressed first and the proactive steps that should be taken to avoid issues. This may involve upgrading firmware or hardware that is about to become out of date.

“The My AutoSupport tool categorizes and prioritizes recommendations so teams don’t have to sort through them on their own,” says Pridhvi Appineni, the IT Storage Services team manager at NetApp. “Often, simply by upgrading firmware, we can avoid an issue.”

Each week, the service-line engineers at NetApp receive an automatically generated report of recommendations from My AutoSupport and decide which proactive work and patching should be done in their areas. Says Morris, “The recommendations displayed in My AutoSupport are based on continuously updated diagnostics from our internal NetApp systems and are correlated with the diagnostic knowledge gathered from our customer install. We get a playbook of what we should fix in a proactive way.”

Business Benefits

For six months, the NetApp storage team used My AutoSupport recommendations to conduct a weekly process of proactive maintenance. This has resulted in a number of gains.

Eliminating 800 remediation hours annually

Many of the team’s application incidents or service outages were due to known issues or preventable problems. Because of operational process changes and guided proactive maintenance, an average of about eight application incidents per month has

been reduced to one or two. “There has been a 90% reduction in P1 support cases and our internal customers are happy because our uptime has increased,” says Appineni.

Remediating an application outage took an average of about 10 staff hours, the team estimates. By eliminating 7 issues per month, the IT team has reclaimed 70 IT staff hours per month, or more than 800 per year, for more valuable work.

Saving 160 hours per year on inventory management

My AutoSupport also makes it easier for the IT team to plan for storage software and hardware refreshes because the tool indicates when hardware will be at end of support or when software needs to be upgraded.

“Before My AutoSupport, the team would have to spend about 40 hours a quarter, or 160 hours per year, doing a manual inventory to identify these issues,” says Appineni. “Now we can use that time for more strategic tasks.”

Gaining time to increase customer value

Another aspect of the NetApp Fitness program is that employees increase their skill levels. Each week they spend an hour or two taking advantage of the assessments, targeted training, and technical certifications available from the NetApp Learning Center.



In addition, with the NetApp Fitness program in place, Morris has seen the time he spends on operations decrease from 75% to 50% of his week. He and the rest of the team have more time to work on enhancing results for NetApp customers. “We are early adopters of NetApp products, and we now have more time to suggest enhancements that further improve their performance,” says Morris.

The combination of instituting storage service lines, using My AutoSupport, and upgrading skills through training has transformed IT support from reactive to proactive. The net result is increased service availability and improved operational support across NetApp’s legacy IT environment. It’s a process of continuous improvement, Morris notes. “You don’t work out once and say ‘I’m healthy,’” he says. “You keep working out several times a week, and the benefits grow over time.”

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

NetApp Products

NetApp FAS and E-Series

For more information on the NetApp Customer Fitness program, visit www.netapp.com/customerfitness

Environment

Applications: Over 300 business applications, including Exchange, SharePoint®, SAP®, Oracle®, and SQL Server®

Platforms: Windows®, Linux®, Solaris, AIX

Virtualization: VMware®

Network: Cisco®

Protocols

CIFS

NFS

iSCSI

FC



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