

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Eases IT Management, Improves Developer Productivity, and Eliminates Expensive Public Cloud and Hypervisor Licensing Fees

Ruffalo Noel Levitz Gains ‘Peace of Mind’ with Move to Nutanix



CHALLENGE

Ruffalo Noel Levitz (RNL) provides enrollment management, retention assessments, and fundraising software and services to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities, and nonprofits across the United States. Before migrating to Nutanix, RNL was relying on a mix of aging Dell hosts, NetApp storage systems, and a collection of Windows file servers. “Our legacy environment was very complex,” said Bret Snyder, senior server engineer at RNL. “In addition to all of the overhead that comes with managing separate SANs and hosts, the costs of adding additional storage, compute, and networking capacity all at the same time were going through the roof.”

SOLUTION

RNL started investigating new infrastructure options in 2015. “We originally planned on just upgrading our Dell hosts and storage systems, but after attending a local Nutanix event, we decided that hyperconverged infrastructure was a better approach,” Snyder reported. “In addition to simplifying our environment with the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud, the prospect of eliminating our VMware licensing fees was just an added bonus.”

RNL deployed three Nutanix clusters in its production environment, another cluster for development, and an additional redundant cluster for disaster recovery. RNL’s IT team has migrated over 200TB of data and applications over to Nutanix, including the company’s Microsoft SQL Server databases, Exchange and SharePoint deployments, Tableau business intelligence and analytics software, and its proprietary ‘phonathon’ software called CAMPUSCALL. Some of RNL’s educational and non-profit customers choose to purchase and run this software on premises, others use it as a software as a service (SaaS) solution running on Nutanix.

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Faster Performance

“The number one benefit of moving to Nutanix was its high performance,” noted Snyder. “Since migrating to the all flash clusters, we’ve noticed a ‘night and day’ increase in speed. Cloning a new server from start to finish with VMware takes between 30-45 minutes. In contrast, I can have Nutanix up and running in just 1-2 minutes.”

Snyder has been impressed with Nutanix’s performance since the initial installation. “I decided to launch two servers at the same time during our first deployment,” Snyder reported. “I clicked ‘okay to restart’ after joining the first server to the domain, then went to the second computer and did the same thing. I glanced back at the first server less than a minute later, and was shocked to see it was already back up and running.”

“Our CTO now refers to our group as the ‘Get It Done Team’. Whenever our end users ask us for something, we can get it to right away with Nutanix.”

Bret Snyder, Senior Server Engineer,
Ruffalo Noel Levitz



BUSINESS BENEFITS

By replacing its aging legacy infrastructure with Nutanix Enterprise Cloud, Ruffalo Noel Levitz has been able to speed the deployment of new client solutions, pull its development workloads back in house to save on monthly public cloud charges, and enable its IT team to quit worrying about infrastructure uptime on their days off.

INDUSTRY

Software Developer
and Consulting Services

SOLUTION

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud

- Acropolis Software, including virtualization from AHV
- Nutanix Files
- Nutanix Volumes

Software and Applications

- Microsoft SQL Server, Exchange, SharePoint, Tableau
- CAMPUSCALL proprietary 'phonathon' software

BENEFITS

- Enabled IT team to focus on more strategic tasks through simplified storage and server management
- Improved infrastructure reliability and availability
- Boosted developer productivity through reduced time to clone servers from 45 min to 2 min
- Eliminated monthly AWS cloud service and VMware vSphere hypervisor licensing fees
- Use of AHV hypervisor eliminates need for costly virtualization licensing
- Streamlined file services using Nutanix Files, enabling faster restores

RNL's internal end users have also noticed the increase in system performance. "Our developers need access to a lot of different servers in order to create our software solutions," Snyder reported. "They appreciate how much quicker we can deploy new services on Nutanix. Our CTO now refers to our group as the 'Get It Done Team', since whenever our end users ask for something, we can get it to them right away with Nutanix."

Ease of Management

"It's really easy to use the Nutanix platform," Snyder shared. "After working with it for just a few days, I told my colleagues that 'Nutanix works the way that VMware should.' Prism Central manages not only HCI but also AHV virtualization. It does everything we need it to, but it doesn't overwhelm us with a lot of unnecessary options. By easing the management burden, I've been able to focus on more strategic projects."

A Simple Migration to AHV

RNL recently migrated from VMware vSphere's ESXi to Nutanix AHV, a hypervisor included with Nutanix at no additional license cost. "We used Nutanix Xtract to migrate our servers over from VMware to Nutanix," said Snyder. "It's extremely simple to migrate everything to AHV—all you need is a five-minute window for a reboot and everything's back up and running."

Simplifying Storage with Nutanix

RNL was relying on nine separate Windows file servers before moving to Nutanix. "It was very difficult to manage all of those different servers," explained Snyder. "Whenever we needed to restore a file, we had to figure out which file server it was running on before we could begin. Assuming we could actually locate the files—our employees would often have to wait days to get their missing information back and resume work."

RNL replaced its nine Windows file servers with Nutanix Files. "Nutanix Files is a very intelligent solution that enables hands-off management," explained Snyder. "Having 'one big bucket' for all file services with a single administrative interface simplifies file management across the board, including all of our backups. It has eliminated all of the frustration that comes with Windows file server management, and enables us to restore files for our internal end users much faster than before."

Nutanix Volumes makes it possible to implement shared infrastructure that addresses both hyper-convergence and block-level iSCSI storage for physical servers in a single solution—without compromising high availability, scalability, or performance. "Provisioning our Nutanix Files clusters and Nutanix Volumes has been really simple," Snyder said. "In addition to just sharing files, we wanted to dump a bunch of fast attached storage onto our database servers. With Nutanix Volumes, we don't have to do a lot of research before adding storage capacity anymore—the process is very simple. Nutanix Volumes has eliminated all of our project planning overhead, enabling us to easily expand our environment using what we already have on hand."

Moving Development Workloads to the Cloud — and Back Again

"We recently moved some of our workloads to the public cloud so our developers could spin up servers themselves," reported Snyder. "It worked OK, but we quickly realized that it was going to be very expensive. We have more than 300 Dell servers in our dev environment and the monthly costs of running everything in the cloud were escalating quickly."

By moving to Nutanix, RHL now has the ability to spin up servers at the same speed as the cloud. “We pulled back all of the workloads that had made their way to AWS and put them onto Nutanix,” Snyder said. “I haven’t heard a single complaint from any of our developers about the on-premises Nutanix systems not being quick enough, and the cost savings we obtained by moving things back from AWS were quite significant.”

NEXT STEPS

“Nutanix Calm is one of the solutions I’m keeping my eye on,” Snyder noted. “Calm provides the ability to seamlessly select, provision, and manage business applications across both private and public clouds. Being able to deploy both an on-premise and cloud environment with just one click is definitely something I’m looking forward to.”

By moving to Nutanix, RNL’s IT team doesn’t have to worry about the company’s IT infrastructure on weekends anymore. “Nutanix Enterprise Cloud is definitely a robust platform. I always check the console when I arrive at the office first thing Monday morning, but there are never any surprises or glitches. Nutanix has finally given me peace of mind, which is something I never dreamed of as an IT professional!” concluded Snyder.



T. 855.NUTANIX (855.688.2649) | F. 408.916.4039
info@nutanix.com | www.nutanix.com | @nutanix

Nutanix makes infrastructure invisible, elevating IT to focus on the applications and services that power their business. The Nutanix enterprise cloud platform leverages web-scale engineering and consumer-grade design to natively converge compute, virtualization and storage into a resilient, software-defined solution with rich machine intelligence. The result is predictable performance, cloud-like infrastructure consumption, robust security, and seamless application mobility for a broad range of enterprise applications. Learn more at www.nutanix.com or follow us on [Twitter@nutanix](https://twitter.com/nutanix).

©2018 Nutanix, Inc. All rights reserved. Nutanix is a trademark of Nutanix, Inc., registered in the United States and other countries. All other brand names mentioned herein are for identification purposes only and may be the trademarks of their respective holder(s).