

Softchoice and MulvannyG2 Architecture

Architecture Firm Avoids \$140,000 Expense, Gains Huge Scalability with Cloud Storage

softchoice
CASE STUDY

Business Challenges

While fully tech-savvy, MulvannyG2 architects love paper and generate lots of it. More than 42 years in business left the firm with hundreds of millions of pages of archived architectural drawings and related project documents, which it stored at an offsite records storage company at a cost of US\$50,000 a year.

In addition to being expensive, offsite paper storage introduced delays. When an employee needed an archived document, he or she searched the online indexing system by job number and other identifying characteristics, placed a request, and after days of waiting, may or may not receive the correct document.

"If we were in a time crunch, which we usually are, and a customer was tapping their foot, it was not good," says John Cuocci, Information Technology Manager for MulvannyG2 Architecture. "If the document wasn't input into our database correctly, it was very difficult and time consuming to find it."

MulvannyG2 wanted to scan all these documents and archive them digitally so that it could eliminate paper-related costs and delays. Cuocci determined that the firm would need about 20 terabytes of storage over five years to accommodate these electronic archives. For daily and backup storage, MulvannyG2 used a Nimble storage area network (SAN), a premium-priced storage solution that delivers exceptionally fast access speeds. However, Cuocci didn't want to waste his high-priced Nimble storage on archives.

Softchoice Solution

For Cuocci, the choice was clear: buy cheaper on-site storage or move to a cloud solution. "The problem with a cloud solution was that we had no way to index the stored data so that employees could find it," Cuocci says. He turned to Softchoice, a longtime IT solution provider and technology advisor, for help. Softchoice had just learned from Microsoft about the StorSimple family of cloud-integrated storage solutions. StorSimple is an on-premises enterprise SAN that interoperates with Windows Azure to provide hybrid cloud storage for primary, backup, archival, and disaster recovery needs.

Cuocci and his staff purchased the StorSimple solution and set it up the day it arrived with no problems. "We had phenomenal technical support from Microsoft," says Brett Havens, Senior Network Engineer at MulvannyG2 Architecture. "Configuration was straightforward and GUI driven. Once we installed it, Microsoft technical support got online with us and walked us through all the settings. We had it live in no time."

To solve the problem of indexing the data stored in Windows Azure, MulvannyG2 turned to Newforma Project Center, a software program that helps organizations index and manage project information. MulvannyG2 employees use Newforma to index all of their archived documents and store the indexed data on StorSimple. When employees want to access an archived document, they simply enter the related job number and other search criteria; digital documents are returned in minutes.

"Our employees don't know or care whether the document is stored on the on-premises StorSimple device or in the Windows Azure cloud," Cuocci says. "StorSimple manages that. Newforma has very powerful search capabilities that make finding documents super easy."

MULVANNY G2
ARCHITECTURE

Case Study Snapshot:

MulvannyG2 Architecture wanted to digitize millions of archived paper documents but didn't want to spend thousands of dollars on a Storage Area Network (SAN) to hold them. Instead, it deployed Microsoft hybrid cloud storage based on StorSimple cloud-integrated storage and Windows Azure. It avoided US\$140,000 in SAN costs, will eliminate \$50,000 a year in paper storage fees, and gained endless storage scalability and georeplicated disaster recovery.

Client Profile:

MulvannyG2 Architecture is the third-largest retail architect in the world and among the 50 largest architecture firms worldwide (BD World Architecture, 2012). It designs retail, office, mixed-use, and hospitality facilities for global clients, including five of 2012's top 20 Fortune 500 retailers. MulvannyG2 has 338 employees at offices in Washington, Oregon, California, Washington, DC, and China.

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While MulvannyG2 acquired the StorSimple solution for document archiving, the firm's been so impressed that it's eager to use StorSimple for other purposes, such as disaster recovery. "Our current disaster recovery solution involves replicating data from our Bellevue-based Nimble SAN to another Nimble SAN in our Portland, Oregon, office," Cuocci says. "However, if a disaster engulfed the entire Pacific Northwest, we would lose all our data. By using StorSimple hybrid cloud storage for disaster recovery, we could safely keep all our production and backup files in the cloud."

Business Outcomes

By deploying the hybrid cloud storage solution of StorSimple and Windows Azure, MulvannyG2 Architecture realized the following benefits:

- Avoid spending \$140,000 on expensive SAN storage. The StorSimple hybrid cloud solution helped MulvannyG2 avoid the significant expense of investing in another SAN. "By using the StorSimple hybrid cloud solution, we avoided spending \$124,000 on a new SAN and an additional \$16,000 annually to manage it," Cuocci says.
- Save \$50,000 a year on offsite storage fees. When all of its documents are digitized, MulvannyG2 will also realize an annual savings of more than \$50,000 for third-party archival fees.
- Extend the life of existing SAN. Additionally, Cuocci estimates that the firm will extend the life of its existing Nimble SAN by at least two years by not using it for archive storage.
- Gain endless storage scalability. "Our archival storage is ever growing, and using Windows Azure for storage alleviates worries about constant expansion," Cuocci says. "The StorSimple solution gives us the scalability we need."
- Achieve better disaster recovery. When MulvannyG2 uses the StorSimple solution for disaster recovery, it will gain geographically distinct data protection and no longer worry about physical backups. "By using the cloud as a disaster recovery site, we get complete protection of all our data in the event of a regional disaster," says Cuocci. "It certainly helps me sleep better at night."

Applicable Business Verticals:

+ Architecture

Geography:

+ Global

Technologies involved:

+ Storage

+ Backup & Recovery

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Information Technology Manager,
MulvannyG2 Architecture