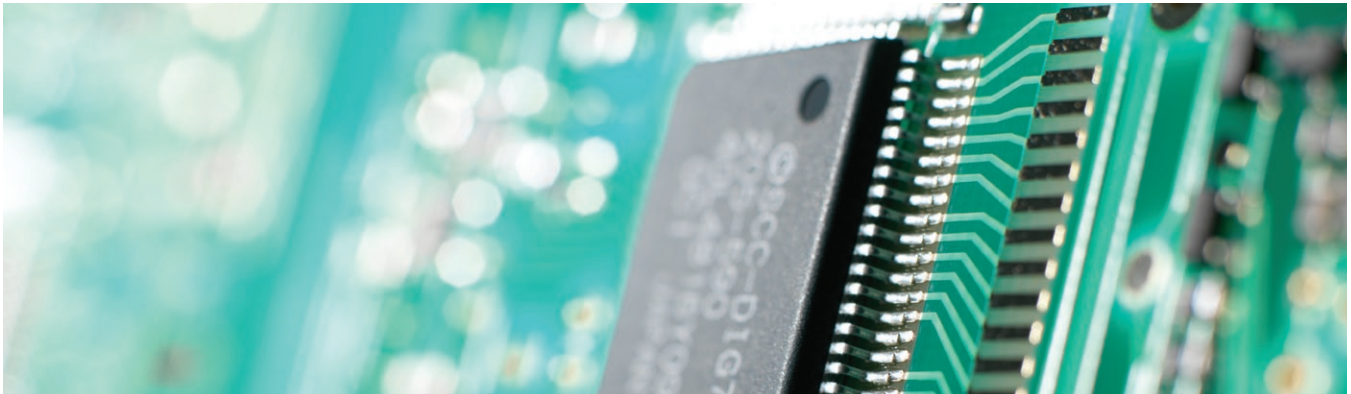




NetApp™
Go further, faster

Success Story

Polaris Software Shrinks Costs, Lead Times, and Time to Recovery by Consolidating on NetApp



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
High tech

The challenge

An outdated IT infrastructure with direct-attached storage jeopardized the company's ability to ramp up IT services, meet stringent SLAs, and keep pace with a 70% CAGR.

The solution

NetApp® solution delivers multiprotocol support for mission-critical business applications and high-speed D2D backup and recovery.

Benefits

- Reduced TCO
- Improved customer service and end-user productivity
- Faster backup and recovery
- Quicker test and development processes

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Headquartered in Chennai, India, Polaris Software Lab is a leading provider of comprehensive products and solution offerings in the banking, financial services, and insurance domains. With 8,000 solution architects, domain experts, and technology experts, Polaris is one of India's leading institutions contributing to the knowledge economy of the global financial services marketplace. With a global footprint of solutions and services, Polaris provides services to some of the world's most prestigious financial services institutions, including ABN AMRO, AIG, Citigroup, Commerzbank, DBS, Deutsch Leasing, Maybank, Shinsei Bank, and UBS.

THE CHALLENGE

Accommodate 70% growth, meet stringent SLAs and recovery objectives, and accelerate project ramp up

Like many fast-growing global organizations, Polaris saw its IT infrastructure morph into an increasingly complex and difficult-to-manage collection of servers, storage, and backup systems. Distributed across multiple facilities, the infrastructure included more than 300 servers accessed by some 6,000 desktops. Difficult to scale and protect, the direct-attached storage environment restricted the company's ability to reliably support 24x7 operations, respond to rapid

growth (70% compound annual growth rate), meet aggressive project schedules, and deliver on stringent SLAs.

Meeting SLAs is a critical requirement in Polaris's ability to deliver responsive client services. Since backup and recovery processes varied from site to site, however, establishing and achieving SLAs were nearly impossible tasks. Some sites performed daily backups, while other offices ran incremental backups. Recovery point objectives (RPOs) varied by site. Backup windows were also becoming an issue and were beginning to affect operations. For example, the main facility at Chennai performed backups over the weekend, but a full backup of 1.5TB of data took three days, exceeding the available windows.

To make sure of business continuity for IT services clients, Polaris routinely shipped backup tapes to an off-site archive. This process posed logistics challenges and, because there was always a chance of a failed tape restore, did not fully make sure of recovery. Also, recovery from a failure event could take two or three days—too long in a demanding IT services environment. The process was also an administrative burden and required significant expenses for equipment and media.

“In the competitive IT services space, it’s essential to have a storage infrastructure that not only scales easily, but that lets us deliver on the highest availability SLAs to both internal and external customers. With NetApp unified storage and business continuity solutions, we’ve been able to achieve all of our key objectives.”

V. Balakrishnan

Chief Information Officer, Polaris Software Lab Ltd.

With aggressive project timelines, Polaris needed a storage infrastructure that could quickly ramp up to deliver on-demand capacity. In the existing environment, servicing projects often meant implementing costly disk upgrades on the company’s RISC servers and suffering disk delivery lead times of 12 to 16 weeks. The upgrade process also made it impossible to quickly respond to growth in messaging volumes. As the number of mail users and volumes grew, Polaris had to upgrade its mail servers frequently. Data migration could cost a full day of downtime, so upgrades increasingly jeopardized the availability of messaging services.

“Clearly, the rapid growth in the number of mail users and our expanding project needs were outpacing what our current storage architecture was capable of delivering,” says V. Balakrishnan, chief information officer at Polaris. “Lack of a centrally controlled and uniform business continuity process was constraining our ability to meet the tough SLA demands of internal and external customers. We had to rearchitect our entire storage infrastructure to address these challenges and build a foundation for future growth.”

THE SOLUTION

Standardize on NetApp unified storage for consolidation of information assets and tapeless backup and recovery

After detailed competitive analyses, Polaris selected NetApp for data consolidation and high-speed disk-to-disk (D2D) backup and recovery. Lotus Notes messaging and file services are now consolidated on clustered NetApp FAS940 systems deployed at all major Polaris facilities. Supporting both block and file access on the same platform, NetApp enables simple and cost-effective consolidation of Lotus Notes (accessed using IP SAN) and file services (using NAS protocols).

Balakrishnan says, “As we evaluated competing options, all of the other vendors we considered offered only mix-and-match solutions for our requirements of NAS and SAN access. In addition, most vendors were not very confident of their solutions fitting into a Lotus Notes environment connected by an IP SAN. The choice of IP SAN for consolidating messaging was driven by the desire to leverage our existing Ethernet network and IP skill sets.”

Polaris also required FC SAN in the same platform to support a number of the company’s applications based on Oracle®. “Clearly, the options from competitive vendors were not the answer,” Balakrishnan notes.

“NetApp has the only proven converged NAS/SAN offering.”

In addition to improving access to project and mail data, Polaris can now better service applications running on SQL Server® and Oracle Databases, as well as ClearCase tools, due to the migration from DAS to networked storage.

Beyond multiprotocol support and improved access, NetApp offers essential scalability. Polaris can now easily accommodate project ramp-up demands as well as growth in messaging volumes, leveraging a common set of provisioning and backup processes for both environments.

Another differentiating capability of NetApp is robust, disk-based backup. “Deploying a NetApp NearStore® solution with NetApp SnapVault® software helps us move closer to our goal of tapeless, serverless backup, as well as improved availability SLAs,” says Balakrishnan.

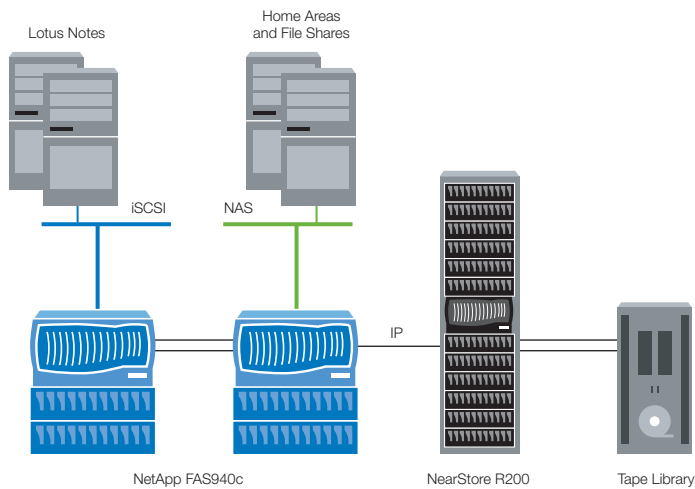


Figure 1) The NetApp unified storage solution.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Improved customer service, faster ramp up, cost savings, and easy scalability

“Since implementing the NetApp solution, I can hardly remember an instance over the last couple of years when users have asked for data to be restored from tape,” Balakrishnan observes. “Recovery time is almost instantaneous, and RPO is one hour for messaging and previous day for file shares and databases. The NetApp solution has also allowed us to commit tighter availability SLAs to our demanding clients. And our ability to quickly ramp up project capacities has obviously given us an important tool to delight our clients. We have achieved all of our key objectives with the NetApp solution, which, I should add, was implemented flawlessly.”

Reduced TCO with NetApp unified storage

“As an early innovator and the current market leader in IP SAN, NetApp was the logical choice for our Notes consolidation project,” comments Balakrishnan. “We saw tremendous value in the NetApp unified storage approach. Having a single platform to support block and file access enables us to support our growing operation with minimal investment risks. And having to manage just one platform, instead of two or even three, makes for a sound TCO proposition.”

The unified storage solution has helped Polaris improve the efficiency of test and development operations in the company’s diverse application and operating systems environment. NetApp has also enabled Polaris to provision storage quicker and faster to meet client and project needs.

Essential data availability and business continuation

While the clustered storage system makes sure of continuous availability, NetApp NearStore provides high-speed backup and restore functionality at Polaris headquarters. NetApp NearStore also enables centralized backup of other locations, enabling implementation of uniform processes across all facilities. Disk-based backup and restore allow Polaris to deliver tighter availability SLAs for both projects and messaging users. With NearStore, Polaris has been able to reduce tape backups to just once a month for long-term archiving at an off-site location. The result is significantly reduced tape media and management costs.

Centralizing and standardizing backup processes has allowed Polaris to improve recovery point and recovery time objectives (RTOs)—and meet stringent SLA requirements. Balakrishnan remarks, “We were impressed with the fact that disk-based backup and disaster recovery functionality

were built into all NetApp platforms, requiring only a software license for activation of the features.”

NetApp Snapshot™ enables Polaris to create frequent point-in-time copies and to reduce the time required to restore files or mail data. A better RPO translates directly into improved productivity for end users. Beyond improving system uptime, this critical element improves overall data availability for Polaris users. Since administrators are no longer required to search for the right tapes to restore data, NetApp conserves valuable IT staff resources.

Says Balakrishnan, “If there is one recommendation I could give to anyone looking for storage consolidation, it is the need to have clear goals for the solution. Evaluation of solution options must be done with single-minded focus on achieving those goals, without being swayed by vendor technospeak. Not doing so may lead to a wrong technology or vendor choice, and you end up delivering less than what your customers expected.

“With storage consolidation complete at all sites, our next step is implementation of mirroring between the Chennai and Mumbai facilities using NetApp SnapMirror® software. Smaller Chennai facilities and the Hyderabad

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Chief Information Officer, Polaris Software Lab Ltd.

facility will utilize NetApp SnapVault software to back up to the main Chennai site, as will the Delhi site to Mumbai. The Chennai and Mumbai sites will mirror data with each other using SnapMirror. With this topology, we will be able to achieve site-level disaster recovery everywhere. Long term, our plan is to also implement country-level DR by setting up a business continuity site outside India.

“Other considerations in the pipeline are data classification and migration solutions that will allow us to delete data that is not used or critical to business, and implementation of desktop backups for key workgroups. With the increasing emphasis on regulatory compliance and data privacy for businesses in North America and Europe, where Polaris has large clients, data retention and storage encryption solutions are also on our road-map. We are confident that the scalable and robust architecture of the NetApp solution will enable us to continue to effectively execute our key business strategies.”

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

NetApp Products

NetApp FAS940C
NetApp NearStore
NetApp SnapVault

Protocols

IP SAN
FC SAN
NAS

Environment

Applications: Lotus Notes, Oracle Database, Microsoft® SQL Server, IBM Rational ClearCase

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