



Colorcon Makes the Smart Move to Tintri Application-Aware Storage

Tintri Takes the Worry Out of Storage for Leading Pharmaceutical Supplier

The Pharmaceutical Supplier of Choice

Colorcon is a world leader in the development, supply, and support of formulated products for the pharmaceutical industry. Founded on a deep commitment to technology, research, and development, Colorcon is always looking for new ways to improve its pharmaceutical products and services. "We understand the importance of 'speed-to-market' in the competitive, fast-paced pharmaceutical industry," noted Paul Newman, manager of global network architecture at Colorcon. "Our IT infrastructure must always be optimized and high performing so we can help our customers produce highly effective pharmaceutical formulations in very short timeframes."

Reliance on a Shared SAN Environment

Colorcon was relying on an aging NetApp storage for the company's global operations. "Our NetApp SAN was being used to support both our VMware and nonvirtualized environments," Newman explained. "Since we didn't have a dedicated storage administrator, our DBAs and VMware admins were making changes to the SAN. There was always the risk that something one group was doing would cause performance issues to the other environment. We wanted to separate the two storage environments to remove the risk of changes in one environment impacting the other."

Not having a dedicated SAN administrator also meant every administrative task and troubleshooting process took much longer. "To create more disk, our admins had get out their 'cheat sheets' to remember how to create a LUN or a volume on the NetApp SAN, and then perform the administrative actions," noted Newman. "It was a very time-consuming and inefficient scenario."

Why Tintri?

"To be honest, we didn't look too deeply at any other storage solutions," Newman admitted. "We've had a keen eye on Tintri since we first saw a demo at London IP Expo a few years ago and learned about all of its advantages. When our UK partner reseller Teneo also recommended Tintri, we knew it was the right decision for our VMware storage environment."

Colorcon tested its first Tintri T540 array on a 'sale or return' basis. "It was very clear after two weeks of using the Tintri that we would not be returning the appliance," Newman reported. "We moved every single VM over to the new array within a day. All VMs immediately ran much faster on Tintri than on our NetApp FAS3140."



Industry

Pharmaceuticals

Location

Harleysville, PA

Virtualization environment

- VMware ESXi, vCenter
- 1,200 users globally
- Prior to Tintri: NetApp FAS 3140 SAN

VM profile

- VMware VMs, vSphere, VAAI
- VEEAM backup software
- Cisco network infrastructure

Key challenges

- SAN storage was difficult to administer, troubleshoot, and optimize
- Cost of storage and support was too high
- Lacked visibility into performance bottlenecks
- Cumbersome to move data between datacenters
- Tape backups were inadequate

Tintri solution

Four Tintri VMstore™ T540 arrays with ReplicateVM

Primary use case

- Primary use case cost-effective storage for all virtual environments
- Secondary use case replicating critical VMs for disaster protection

Business Benefits

- Simplified storage administration and enabled optimization of VMware environment
- Cut time to deploy new VMs by 10x and substantially reduced storage administration
- Cost of first Tintri plus 3 years of support equal to just adding support to existing SAN
- Greatly simplified movement of VM data between datacenters and increased WAN efficiency
- Simplified and improved disaster recovery with Tintri ReplicateVM

After the successful trial of the first storage appliance, Colorcon purchased three additional Tintri T540 arrays. Two were installed at the company's UK datacenter and the other two at Colorcon's US facility. "Although all four Tintri systems are now being used in production, our intention is to leave enough space on the UK systems so we will be able to replicate our critical VMs from US to the UK for disaster protection," Newman explained.

Cutting High Storage Support Cost

In addition to the difficulties with storage management and optimization, the cost of support was also too high. "It was actually cheaper to buy brand-new Tintri T540 systems with three years of support than just adding maintenance to our existing SAN," Newman reported. "When we showed our current vendor the price comparison, they said we could buy smaller storage devices with lower performance and save a bit of money. But even then, it was still twice the cost of getting a new Tintri with a maintenance contract."

Finding Performance Bottlenecks

Newman also reported that it was difficult to identify performance bottlenecks in the shared SAN environment. "The NetApp storage administration interface was completely separate from our VMware environment," noted Newman. "All the NetApp system could report is that 'this particular LUN or collection of disks has this amount of performance'. In contrast, Tintri's intuitive UI enables us to quickly identify problem with our virtual machines. I can immediately see if one VM is bringing down performance across the entire stack. Tintri's visibility into individual VM performance is unparalleled!"

Moving Data between Datacenters

Tintri has also made it much easier to move data between Colorcon's US and UK environments. "Given that I could only replicate LUNs on a NetApp system, I had to use a third-party tool to replicate a select set of VMs," Newman explained. "But we had to buy additional software to replicate virtual machines from one data center to another, adding even more cost and management complexity. With Tintri, I can simply select a VM and quickly replicate it to another Tintri system. I press just one button and it's done. That's something you can't do natively with other storage vendors' products."

Slashing VM Deployment Time by 10x

Before Tintri, deploying a new VM was a time-consuming task. "Tintri's VM-aware storage has simplified our storage provisioning and management tasks. We just open the VMware vCenter user interface, deploy the VM from a template, and it tells Tintri what to do in the background. The whole process now takes just two minutes, as opposed to 20 minutes with our previous setup."

Colorcon's admins are now spending far less time managing storage. "By moving to Tintri storage, we have eliminated the need to hire a dedicated SAN admin," Newman replied. "Tintri's VM-aware intelligence has eliminated over an hour per week for routine storage maintenance, including software upgrades, configuring new LUNS, etc. And that savings doesn't even count downtime, or time spent troubleshooting or fixing any issues. Tintri really is a 'set it and forget it' platform."

Relying on Tintri Support

Newman also had very positive things to say about Tintri support. "I like the way the Tintri systems send automatic notifications if something goes wrong or needs attention. We received one just a few weeks ago, when we were rebooting vCenter after a Microsoft patch update. The Tintri appliance triggered a support ticket because it noticed that vCenter was unavailable to the storage. Even though it wasn't actually a problem, the automatic notifications are very reassuring."

Conclusion

"I would absolutely recommend Tintri to other companies that need a high-performing, application-aware storage solution for their VMware environments," Newman concluded. "I don't have the time to think about storage all day long. Tintri storage appliances have the VM-aware intelligence built in. With Tintri, I don't need to worry about storage anymore."

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—Paul Newman, manager of global network architecture at Colorcon



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