

# Adventist Risk Management Believes in Nutanix Enterprise Cloud

Captive Insurance Provider Switches to Nutanix to Deliver Medical, Property, Cyber Risk and Other Insurance Services to the Church and Its Global Members

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- Tony Vargas, VP/CIO, Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

## CHALLENGE

Adventist Risk Management was relying on a traditional IT environment, consisting of a collection of IBM blade center systems running Citrix XenServer, with Cisco network and switches, connected to a large stack of Dell EqualLogic storage devices on an ISCSI network. “When we originally moved to those systems a few years ago, the upgrade was very expensive since we had to replace everything at once,” explained Tony Vargas, VP and CIO at Adventist Risk Management. “I didn’t want the expense and disruption that came with having to ‘rip and replace’ everything at the same time during a future upgrade, so I put together a plan for replacing our traditional infrastructure with a more modern solution over a period of four to five years.”

## SOLUTION

Vargas and his team started looking at hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) options in 2013. After reviewing solutions from the main HCI players, they decided to do a test deployment on Nutanix. “We switched to Nutanix because

## COMPANY SPECIFICS

Adventist Risk Management (ARM) is the captive insurance company for the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The company provides a wide range of insurance solutions and services to the Church, its ministries, and members around the world, including property, risk management, cybersecurity, and medical insurance.

## INDUSTRY

Insurance and Risk Management

## SOLUTION

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud

- Acropolis, including AHV virtualization

### Applications

- HYCU Backup and Recovery Software
- Ventiv Claims insurance management system
- MS Dynamics SL financial system

## BENEFITS

- Reduced IT complexity, eliminating the need for IT team to work evenings and weekends
- Enabled fast, non-disruptive upgrades
- Increased security with the ability to perform more frequent patches

their hyperconverged infrastructure eliminated all of the complexity of our previous environment and enabled modular upgrades, while still allowing us the flexibility to use VMware or any other hypervisor,” reported Vargas.

ARM’s IT team started with a local test installation of Nutanix, followed by a remote installation the following year to explore some of Nutanix’s more advanced features, including Protection Domains. “The tests exceeded all of our expectations for performance and reliability, so we quickly made the decision to move full ahead with Nutanix,” reported Vargas. Adventist Risk Management is now running Nutanix at all of its sites, including the company’s headquarters in Maryland, five satellite offices, and disaster recovery site in Idaho.

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## RESULTS

### Ease of Working with One Vendor

ARM also switched to the Nutanix Acropolis hypervisor to gain all of the benefits that come from working with one vendor. “We are a small business, but we’re running an enterprise-sized IT environment,” Vargas explained. “It’s very difficult to run that large of an environment unless you employ separate experts for your storage, hypervisor, and networking infrastructure. The simplicity of the Nutanix architecture eliminated the need to hire and train multiple IT specialists. With the ability to work with one piece of hyperconverged infrastructure from a single vendor, it brought our enterprise environment to the level our small team of IT professionals could easily manage.”

### Non-Disruptive Upgrades

“By switching to AHV, we eliminated the ongoing licensing fees we were paying for our previous hypervisor. But the real magic for us was the simplicity of the Nutanix upgrades,” noted Vargas. “Maintenance on our traditional infrastructure was very complex, requiring lots of evening and weekend work for our team, and we’d have to take all of our systems offline. With Nutanix and AHV, we just plug in the new nodes, fire them up, add them to the cluster, transfer the workloads, and pull out the old nodes. A process that used to take hours, takes only a few minutes with Nutanix. And most importantly, we can now upgrade our environment during business hours without scheduling any downtime”

### Excellent Support

“Whenever you try to diagnose a problem in a traditional environment with multiple solutions, there’s always a lot of finger-pointing,” noted Vargas. “Some of the other HCI vendors we looked at were still relying on other vendors’ solutions to complete their virtualization stack, but Nutanix offered an end-to-end solution. Having one vendor for the entire stack was a very appealing concept to me. The hyperconverged design also reduces downtime. Since we’ve put in Nutanix, we haven’t had any outages at all in regards to our virtualization stack. Nutanix’s reliability is second to none.”

### Using HYCU Backup and Recovery Software

Adventist Risk Management is using HYCU software to back up its Nutanix systems. “HYCU is a phenomenal backup solution,” stated Vargas. “It took several months to deploy our previous backup environment, and we were never able to get it working correctly--even after countless hours of troubleshooting with the vendor. In contrast, it only took a few minutes to get HYCU installed and we were immediately backing up half a petabyte of storage from the Nutanix systems. There is simply no better backup solution for Nutanix than HYCU.”

### Relying on Nutanix Protection Domains

Adventist Risk Management runs all of its Nutanix infrastructure on-premise, with a separate disaster recovery site in Boise, Idaho. “Our DR system wouldn’t be as seamless without Nutanix,” admitted Vargas. “Before Nutanix, we had to move terabytes of data back and forth each night from all of our satellite sites and headquarters to our DR site. We are now using the Nutanix Protection Domains feature to automatically replicate everything to our Idaho facility. That Nutanix feature has dramatically improved how we handle our business continuity and disaster recovery.”

### Increasing Security with More Frequent Patches

Applying patches was a very complex and time-consuming process in the traditional environment. “Whenever patches would come out, we’d have to ask multiple admins to come in on weekends and evenings to finish all of the work,” reported Vargas. “As a result, we’d wait to apply patches during quarterly scheduled outages. With Nutanix, one admin can update everything during the day, with no disruption to operations. It’s absolutely a safer and smoother-running environment today with Nutanix because we are fully patched all of the time.”

### Managing the Security Environment In-House

After the move to Nutanix was complete, ARM completely rebuilt its security environment. “We are a very attractive attack target to hackers because we’re not just an insurance company, we’re also a healthcare company and a religious organization,” explained Vargas. “Security is always a top concern for our IT department.”

ARM chose to implement an end-to-end protection solution from Cisco for its security overhaul. The IT team rolled the solution out with Cisco’s help, but still had to rely on Cisco’s experts for ongoing management. “The cost of having Cisco manage the solution was cost prohibitive,” Vargas reported. “By simplifying our entire environment with Nutanix, it freed up enough IT resources to manage our new security infrastructure. Without Nutanix going in first, we would definitely not have had the internal resources to implement that project and manage it ourselves.”

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## NEXT STEPS

Now that Vargas and his team aren’t spending so much time on system maintenance, they’re able to tackle new projects. “Like any small IT department, we always have plenty to do,” said Vargas. “By moving to Nutanix, we can now focus on more strategic projects. We’re also very excited about using Nutanix Calm. After hearing about its functionality during a visit to our local Nutanix office, I couldn’t stop dreaming about all of the ways it will simplify things for us. We plan to start using Calm early next year.”

### Final Thoughts

“Even though we’re a small insurance organization, we face the same operational challenges as much larger global organizations,” noted Vargas. “We have strict uptime requirements for our insurance applications, and our web presence is multi-language and multi-content based on local cultures and locality concerns. I truly believe that traditional technologies would not be able to provide the level of functionality and stability required by our global clientele. Nutanix is the reason we as an SMB are able to provide that level of uptime and resiliency to our clients. The difference between working with traditional infrastructure and Nutanix is night and day. I don’t think any other platform would enable us to accomplish all of our IT and corporate goals as easily as we can with Nutanix.”



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