

Data-driven Decision Making Increases Efficiency at Natures Organics

With Nutanix, Natures Organics boosts visibility across the business while lowering costs to be even more competitive.

Natures Organics wanted to overhaul its energy hungry and power lacking IT infrastructure. Business reporting was impacted because of database timeouts which in turn limited the company's ability to make data-driven decisions. For a business operating in the fast moving consumer goods sector where business agility is a key factor, the situation was less than optimal.

Working with Nutanix partner Australian Sentinel, Natures Organics deployed a Nutanix hyperconverged infrastructure and began moving applications and databases across. This turned things around, and the company saw a 700 percent improvement in business intelligence reports. What's more, IT costs overall were cut 32 percent and energy use by 55 percent, helping Natures Organics stay competitive. Furthermore, the simplicity and performance of Nutanix ensured Natures Organics could switch in a timely manner to remote working during the pandemic.

Challenge

Natures Organics, launched in 1981, manufactures a range of popular eco-friendly brands, including Earth Choice, Australian Pure, and OC Naturals. Based in Australia, it creates over 50 million units each year of high-quality, affordable, and naturally derived products sold through major retailers.

The company's environmental responsibility starts at the sourcing of the ingredients for its products and goes right through to the manufacturing processes behind its goods. To lower the impact on the environment, Natures Organics even has thousands of solar panels on the roof of its manufacturing plant, producing 1,800 MWh of electricity a year. The company knew it could do more and focused its attention on the IT infrastructure supporting its entire operations. The legacy three-tier infrastructure was approaching end of life and now was the time to "shake things up" according to Alex Plattfuss, head of IT at Natures Organics.

There was a lot of shaking to do if the company was going to make the infrastructure less power hungry and more effective at supporting its continued success. Of the IT challenges faced, a lack of performance at the database and application layers was possibly the biggest. Plattfuss shares the example of issues with extracting reports from a customer service system, which essentially stores feedback on products.

Industry

Manufacturing

Key Benefits

- Gains 700% improvement in BI reports through the modernized infrastructure
- Reduces IT costs by 32% allowing company to better compete
- Lowers energy consumption by 55%
- Reduces risk by 70% based on Sentinel report
- Simplifies IT management and makes upgrades pain-free
- Enables WFH during pandemic

Products

Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure

- Nutanix AOS
- Nutanix Prism management software
- Nutanix AHV
- Nutanix Files

Because of timeouts, personnel were limited on how far back data could be analyzed for reports. “It just wasn’t business friendly,” says Plattfuss, and potentially impacted product development. Likewise, extracting insight from IT helpdesk tickets in order to identify trends to shape IT strategy could take a significant chunk of time out of a busy schedule. There just wasn’t the flexibility to pull reports on-the-fly to help address specific business problems. Plattfuss puts the situation in context when he says, “We operate in FMCG [fast moving consumer goods] which is incredibly challenging. The competition in our industry is intense where costs and level of agility make the difference.”

Solutions

Natures Organics worked with trusted IT partner Australian Sentinel to assess the legacy infrastructure, including its security risks, and to help find a solution. The Nutanix Partner proposed a Nutanix hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) as the right solution to meet the company’s requirements. Plattfuss remembers, “Australian Sentinel helped us identify the areas of our IT that needed improving, and put forward Nutanix to give us performance, agility, and security. We quickly developed a great working relationship and subsequently made Australian Sentinel the managed services provider for our HCI investment.”

Tim Crouch, managing director and co-founder of Australian Sentinel, says, “Nutanix was the enterprise-ready solution that Natures Organics needed to turn IT into an enabler—providing the performance and agility to keep developing the business.”

Natures Organics deployed two Nutanix HCI clusters to support the production and disaster recovery (DR) environments. It began migrating workloads over to the HCI, including the Pronto Xi enterprise resource planning (ERP) software that supports the customer service system and core Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, and MariaDB databases. Natures Organics also moved across the IT helpdesk system, plus many others including a custom warehouse management automation application. The underlying HCI software is the Nutanix Cloud Platform, with Nutanix AHV as the hypervisor and Nutanix Prism for one-click management. The company is now using Nutanix Files to replace a legacy file server. “The beauty of Nutanix Files is its simplicity, being integrated into the HCI, and that it supports all types of files,” comments Plattfuss.

Applications

- Pronto enterprise resource planning (ERP)
- Customer service system
- Warehouse management automation
- IT help desk
- Microsoft SQL Server databases
- MySQL and MariaDB databases

“With Nutanix, we have a solid foundation for smart manufacturing initiatives, using the power of data to increase the efficiency of our operations from sourcing materials to production and right through to distribution.

Alex Plattfuss
Head of IT,
Natures Organics



Customer Outcomes

Gains 700% Improvement in Business Intelligence Reports

With Nutanix, database and application performance has improved dramatically. The problem of timeouts is in the past, and staff can extract reports based on many thousands of records of customer feedback going back years and comments in seconds. Equally, helpdesk data over a decade can be crunched just as equally to support strategy decisions. The increase in performance is around 700 percent, and all departments can gain insight from the company data to deliver their business goals. “We are more agile,” comments Plattfuss, who believes the organization is now getting the real value out of its ERP. “Finally, we can run reports ad hoc.”

Reduces IT Costs By 32% Allowing Company to Better Compete

Extracting business insight quickly is just one of the benefits of the HCI that speaks directly to the needs of a FMCG. Another is cost reduction, which in a market where manufacturing is often located in countries with the lowest labor expense, is crucial. Natures Organics produces locally and has to maximize the efficiency of production to remain competitive. Plattfuss says, “We’re passionate about our connections to the local community, and the Nutanix HCI directly contributes to keeping our costs down and our efficiency up in order to continue manufacturing in Australia.”

Lowers Energy Consumption By 55%

With Nutanix, Natures Organics has also been able to reduce energy usage—aligning IT even closer with the organization’s aims of minimizing its environmental impact. Plus, with less energy use comes less cost, in turn helping the organization stay competitive and maintain its local ties.

Reduces Risk By 70% Based on Sentinel Report

When Australian Sentinel assessed the legacy infrastructure, it identified the legacy infrastructure’s security risks and made security one of the key criteria in the selection process. With security baked into the Nutanix HCI, Natures Organics reduced risks by 70 percent, bolstering security through features such as data-at-rest encryption, data access controls, and automated security testing.

Simplifies IT Management and Makes Upgrades Pain-free

The ease of using Nutanix was noted from the start. “The migration process has been very straightforward—essentially picking up the databases and putting them down the HCI,”



recounts Plattfuss, who adds that Nutanix is easy to learn. “We trust the Nutanix stack,” he continues. “Running updates was nerve-wracking in the past because you didn’t know what was going to happen. With Nutanix, we’re doing rolling updates, and everything is smooth. With Nutanix, we’re doing rolling updates and everything is smooth.”

Enables Work From Home (WFH) During Pandemic

The simplicity and power of Nutanix hit home when the COVID-19 pandemic forced staff to work remotely. Natures Organics’ virtual private network was switched to Nutanix early on and immediately provided the performance for a large uptick in the number of remote users. Plattfuss believes the fact that the company could respond so quickly to a changing situation talks to the value of Nutanix. Plattfuss says, “You have this solid base and then you start to see what you’re capable of. This is really the beginning for us with Nutanix and we’re nicely set up for the future.”

Next Steps

Natures Organics still has work to do, migrating the last few remaining applications to Nutanix, and has an upgrade of its Pronto Xi ERP on the horizon. The HCI will enable for the ever-tighter integration between IT and manufacturing, allowing the company to continue its journey towards smarter production. On the to-do list is a dedicated warehouse management system to optimize warehousing and distribution still further. Plattfuss concludes, “Being able to make data-driven decisions and automating processes is really going to help us thrive.”

Learn more at www.nutanix.com



About Australian Sentinel

Nutanix Partner Australian Sentinel applied its IT expertise to analyzing the legacy IT at Natures Organics and coming up with a solution that could meet the business need today and tomorrow. The partner, which helped with the Nutanix HCI deployment, is now providing a Nutanix managed service to Natures Organics to help optimize performance.



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