



Nimble Storage

Review From A Customer

From IT Central Station, the leading review site for enterprise technology solutions.

Review by a Real User

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Director of Information Technology at a transportation company with 501-1,000 employees

James Mercer

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

Availability of our environment has exceeded “five nines”, along with performance being stellar.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

Performance, reliability, InfoSight, the ability to upgrade the O/S on the SAN without taking it down, and cost. Poor performance and reliability would adversely affect my company’s productivity, and thus would increase overall labor costs as people took longer to do their jobs. (Especially if and when critical systems were down due to an outage.) It would also negatively affect employee and customer perception of the quality of IT services. InfoSight is extremely valuable, because it gives us (IT) a direct understanding of historical performance and capacity trends, including projected utilization based on those trends. This in turn allows us to perform capacity planning before we reach the point where it becomes an issue. Further, some of the information in InfoSight gives us a direct understanding of which of our virtual servers is the most I/O bound. That allows us to investigate the server and mitigate disk traffic through configuration changes at the server level. Regarding uninterrupted upgrades, one of the biggest problems with upgrading SANs is the fact that (except for Nimble!) you have to take down the SAN to do so. This requires the quiescence of any servers relying on that storage, and thus a service stoppage. While this can be done on a scheduled basis as “scheduled downtime”, the fact that Nimble permits us to upgrade transparently WITHOUT service interruption not only improves perceptions of IT, but it also changes what is normally a multi-hour process into a 30 minute process... saving time and money.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Right now, all Nimble arrays offer data compression to disk, but only the Flash (SSD) arrays offer in-line deduplication. I’d like to see in-line deduplication extended to Nimble non-flash (called “Hybrid”) arrays, even if it’s only the C500 and higher controllers that support it.

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WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

While I speak about “five nines”, the truth is we’ve had 100% up-time (no outages, not even planned) for over 3 years.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

We have not encountered any scalability issues.

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

Technical support is extraordinary. Their technical support often helps us with VMware issues and related products when the issue isn’t with their SAN – which is almost always true.

WHICH SOLUTION DID I USE PREVIOUSLY AND WHY DID I SWITCH?

We used NetApp. We switched due to performance and manageability requirements. NetApp was simply an average performer, and managing it was difficult.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

The SAN setup itself was simple and easy. The biggest challenge we had was in changing our network to accommodate turning off Spanning Tree Protocol for that segment.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

If you evaluate a SAN based on total cost of ownership, you have to consider the cost to the company for down time and maintenance windows, among other things. Their price structure for purchase and pricing for maintenance is excellent. Just as importantly, there are no “additional software modules” to buy at an added price. You get everything up front. From a price/performance perspective, Nimble simply can’t be beat. From a TCO perspective, the stability alone pays for itself.

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

We evaluated offerings from IBM, HP, EMC, and a number of smaller vendors, such as AppAssure.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

Be prepared for your staff to want to abandon all other SAN’s you may have in place. Make sure your network and network switches are capable of handling the performance, because it would be a shame to buy something so incredibly fast only to choke it down on the Ethernet side of things.

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