



NetApp®

## Success Story

# Aegis Media Builds IT Infrastructure on FlexPod to Help Double Business Growth in Five Years

A E G I S  
M E D I A

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TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES



### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Industry

Media communications

#### The Challenge

Create an easy-to-manage global IT platform and five regional data centers from fractured legacy IT systems to enable ambitious business growth.

#### The Solution

Implement a FlexPod® Datacenter solution from NetApp and Cisco, with NetApp® backup storage to create a flexible, future-proofed platform.

#### Benefits

- 15% reduction in IT budget
- 30% reduction in power consumption
- 80% server virtualization
- 50% reduction in storage footprint
- Automated data deduplication
- Single management pane
- Consolidated from 160 data centers to 5 regional data centers
- Created flexible, future-proofed platform for hybrid cloud and new business services

### Customer Profile

Aegis Media is the world's leading media and digital communications group. Including five main network brands—Carat, iProspect, Isobar, Posterscope, and Vizeum—the company helps its clients build consumer relationships by effectively communicating their products and brands. Its services include communications strategy through creative digital media, media planning and buying, mobile applications, search engine optimization (SEO), brand tracking, and market analytics.

The organization employs approximately 12,000 people, has a presence in 80 countries across five continents, and chalked up a £197.4 million operating profit in 2011. Its overarching strategy is to double revenues in the next five years through aggressive acquisition and by developing its business in line with its clients' growth.

### The Challenge

#### Create a globalized infrastructure from fractured legacy systems

Several years ago Aegis Media undertook a comprehensive review of its business and concluded that an organizational transformation of finance, HR, and IT was essential to meet ambitious growth

targets. The company's existing IT infrastructure was broad and decentralized, with architectures that were disjointed and incompatible. It had 60 IT departments, a federated IT estate, and no standards, making global management a challenging, costly, and time-consuming complexity.

Given the company's global scale, with approximately 14,000 users across its territories, and the fact that it had grown organically through acquisition, it was hardly surprising that its operational model was costly and inefficient. For example, in some regions servers were located beneath desks and in cupboards.

Overall, the company had 2,700 servers, approximately one for every five people. It also had over 1,000 network switches from six different vendors and an inefficient application portfolio that consisted of 1,300 line-of-business applications, of which more than 300 were used to monitor and manage the IT estate.

Colin Towers, global CTO, Aegis Media, says, "We have 254 offices in 165 locations across the globe. The company's target is 30% year-on-year growth through acquisition, with the aim of

“One of the key factors for us was that we could go from 3.5” drives to 2.5” drives. This reduces our storage footprint by 50% and also brings down power consumption. Given the global scale of our IT infrastructure, these savings are considerable. The reduction in performance when compared to 3.5” drives is offset by NetApp Flash Cache.”

**James Morris**

Global Architect, Aegis Media

doubling our size by 2017. Clearly, with a fractured IT infrastructure and the enormous management complexity it brings, these growth plans would be seriously hindered.”

The company had 170 data centers, though some of these were little more than isolated servers. It aimed to consolidate these into five regional data centers located in North America, EMEA, and Asia Pacific, with server rooms in Latin America, Russia, China, Australia, and South Africa. The company’s ultimate goal was to create one data center for each region, with 95% of its servers and services located in these data centers. Further, it aimed to virtualize approximately 80% of its servers.

The key driver underpinning these objectives was the development of a global centralized IT infrastructure that would enable the company to easily adopt new services and technologies as and when required. Towers says, “We wanted to build an IT infrastructure that adapts to the business rather than an infrastructure that dictated what the business can do.”

### **The Solution**

#### **A single globalized platform that’s flexible and easy to manage**

One of the first issues to be considered was the foundational platform of storage. James Morris, global architect, Aegis Media, says, “We were taking on a huge consolidation exercise, and we wanted a centralized system that would be easy to manage. Our current data

quantities are in the region of 2.5PB to 3PB and growing at an exponential rate. Storage was an important issue that needed to be successfully addressed for the present and also looking ahead.”

To develop and architect a solution, the company partnered with Tata Consultancy Services. Aegis Media had been using EMC storage solutions for approximately 10 years, but this environment was proving to be complex, with different management requirements for different storage levels. The company considered storage technology from a number of other vendors, including IBM and HP, before deciding on traditional NetApp backup storage along with the FlexPod Datacenter platform from NetApp and Cisco. Morris adds, “The great thing about FlexPod Datacenter is that it’s more straightforward than other technologies. At the storage level, whether it’s an entry-level storage box in a branch office or high-end enterprise storage arrays, the management is the same and can be carried out from a single pane of glass.”

The FlexPod Datacenter solution is a combination of NetApp storage; Cisco® Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) B-Series Blade Servers; Cisco Nexus® 7010, 5596UP, and 5548UP switches; and other Cisco components, with VMware® virtualization software layered on top. The NetApp storage components reduce cost and complexity for a virtualized infrastructure by meeting all storage requirements with a single

scalable solution. This solution supports all protocols out of the box, so the company didn’t need to use different systems for different storage needs. Built-in data deduplication and thin provisioning, along with space-efficient backup, also enhance operational efficiency.

Morris points out, “One of the key factors for us was that we could go from 3.5” drives to 2.5” drives. This reduces our storage footprint by 50% and also brings down power consumption. Given the global scale of our IT infrastructure, these savings are considerable. The reduction in performance when compared to 3.5” drives is offset by NetApp Flash Cache™.”

The intelligent caching functionality within FlexPod is also a powerful feature for Aegis Media. Automatically responding to changing needs, the NetApp storage platform promotes hot data to flash without moving on-disk data. It is also deeply efficient and enables SATA to match Fibre Channel performance at half the cost, and works out of the box with default settings. In short, it is optimized for cost performance.

“We have relationships with all the storage vendors, but what we took from the engagement with NetApp was that we could provide a wide range of services and gain access to a vast pool of flexible storage resources with NetApp backup and the FlexPod platform,” says Morris.

“Our research revealed we could slice and dice data in any number of ways, which is important for our future plans,”

“NetApp took the legacy equipment and consolidated it into five data centers, enabling us to virtualize 80% of servers, which alone leads to significant cost savings and far greater efficiency.”

**Colin Towers**  
Global CTO, Aegis Media

he adds. “Management was also hugely simplified compared to our existing systems. We could manage all our storage from one pane of glass. These were compelling points.”

Data deduplication was another important feature. As a global organization, Aegis Media finds itself with many copies of the same data. By utilizing the built-in data deduplication functionality within FlexPod, the company understood it could avoid needless replication, and in the process, free up significant storage assets.

Integration with VMware was also a compelling feature, enabling the company to create 3,000 virtual machines over 70 physical servers. The FlexPod platform benefits from a long-standing partnership between NetApp and VMware and, together with Cisco, provides a flexible data center platform that is primed to accelerate cloud deployments.

Morris speaks highly of the partnership between the three vendors and says this was another key consideration in the decision to deploy FlexPod: “FlexPod not only delivers a future-proofed platform, but we also have a single point of accountability,” he says. “It gives us peace of mind that we have a single point of contact for service-related issues. If we had taken the best-of-breed route, we would be dealing with many vendors, which would have been enormously complex. And, it would have undermined our ability to create a cohesive IT infrastructure that we could

use to easily and quickly manage and deploy services to the business.”

#### **Business Benefits** **A platform for business growth**

The implementation of the FlexPod platform has enabled Aegis Media to begin consolidating its fractured IT infrastructure into a single, cohesive, easy-to-manage platform.

“It’s a huge consolidation exercise, but one that underpins and helps drive the business forward,” says Towers. “NetApp took the legacy equipment and consolidated it into five data centers, enabling us to virtualize 80% of servers, which alone leads to significant cost savings and far greater efficiency.”

Morris adds, “We couldn’t have done it without NetApp. Its technology on one side, the company has been really good at the architecture level, helping us plan and map out the new platform.”

#### **15% reduction in IT budget (for starters)**

One of the immediate benefits to be realized is a 15% decrease in Aegis Media’s global £90 million IT budget. This savings arose from management efficiencies. “We haven’t yet realized the full benefits, but we expect them to be significant,” points out Towers. Substantial cost-cutting benefits are expected to be reaped after the platform is fully up and running. For example, power consumption costs will fall by approximately 30%, and energy efficiency will improve. To date there has

also been a 25% reduction in required file storage capacity, thanks to automated data deduplication, which frees up storage assets as the business moves forward.

#### **Zero cost for backups**

NetApp Snapshot™ technology is also highly regarded for the value it brings. Morris says, “Sixty percent of our storage requirements are in EMEA. We regularly do a lot of backup and restore, and we didn’t want this to impact the EMEA business. Snapshot technology easily integrates with third-party tools, which enables us to protect our data with no impact on performance and at zero cost.”

The FlexPod platform also helps drive Aegis Media’s acquisition plans forward with greater efficiency and at a lower cost than could be achieved with its legacy systems. The company’s planned doubled growth is partly based on aggressive acquisitions. For example, when Aegis Media previously acquired a company it needed to engage at a local level to bring it under its global IT umbrella. This meant sending teams of people to the acquired company to integrate the IT systems, which could be costly and time consuming given that integration models differed according to the legacy systems. However, the FlexPod platform now enables the company to easily and quickly integrate acquisitions through a single engagement model.

A further key benefit is the future-proof platform provided by FlexPod. In the

“If I were to sum up the benefits of the FlexPod platform and NetApp storage backup, I’d say we’re partnering with industry-leading vendors and using their tightly integrated technologies to provide a globalized IT platform...that allows us to grow and change in line with the business and is easy to manage. In short, it enables us to empower IT and the business.”

**James Morris**

Global Architect, Aegis Media

near future, Aegis Media plans to take advantage of the flexibility offered by a hybrid cloud model by using the cloud to deliver services on demand. Its FlexPod solution can be scaled up or down and duplicated in modular fashion to meet capacity requirements. Morris says, “FlexPod is flexible enough to allow us to grow at our pace toward a hybrid cloud as and when we are ready to do this.”

#### Big data for new business

One area in which the company is planning to use FlexPod to enhance its business offerings is big data. The improved NetApp storage management capabilities within FlexPod are providing a foundation for big data analysis.

“NetApp provides a vast pool of storage resources and refinement for big data,” says Morris. “We’re going to use these to provide our clients with more meaningful insights into marketing and advertising. This is a key to our growth strategy, which will strengthen existing customer relationships and win us new business.”

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#### SOLUTION COMPONENTS

##### FlexPod Components

NetApp FAS2240, FAS3240, FAS3270, FAS6240, and FAS6280 unified storage systems

Cisco UCS B-Series servers

Cisco UCS 6120XP Fabric Interconnect

Cisco UCS 2140 Fabric Extenders

Cisco Nexus 7010 and Cisco

Nexus 5596UP and 5548UP switches

##### Virtualization Components

VMware solutions

##### NetApp Software

NetApp Snapshot technology

NetApp Flash Cache

##### Third-Party Products

Cisco UCS Manager

##### Protocols

FC, FCoE, iSCSI, NFS, CIFS

##### Partner

Tata Consultancy Services

[www.tcs.com](http://www.tcs.com)

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ready for virtualized services,” Morris adds. “We have a future-proofed platform that allows us to grow and change in line with the business and is easy to manage. In short, it enables us to empower IT and the business.”



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