



IDC CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

National Financial Partners: Driving IT Centralization, Improving Collaboration, and Strengthening Brand Presence

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Introduction

National Financial Partners (NFP) is a leading provider of insurance and wealth management services for businesses and high net worth individuals. The company offers property and casualty, retirement, benefits, and consulting solutions to help customers manage risk. Operating across the country with a national footprint, the company has historically grown through acquisition and, until recently, had taken a decentralized approach to branding, business models, and IT strategies, with the local offices managing their operations independently.

Vision

NFP recently underwent an internal business review to determine better ways to unite IT, transform to improve operations, unify the organization's processes and procedures, and strengthen the company's brand nationwide. This process identified significant value in the centralization of core IT function and governance, eliminating shadow IT that had emerged across the regions and improving the sharing of data and best practices across the organization. Siloed operations were impacting the company's ability to create a strong national brand because of disparate processes and customer interactions and were hindering the ability to use valuable data to improve and expand relationships with clients across the various products and services available within NFP. The lack of information-sharing platforms between regions limited collaboration among employees; thus improving employee collaboration was also recognized as a critical business need.

Solution Snapshot

Organization: National Financial Partners

Operational challenge: Centralize IT processes across regional offices, increase collaboration, and strengthen brand

Solution: Egnyte Cloud File Server, Storage Connect, and Storage Sync

Project duration: 3-month evaluation and testing, 6-month implementation

Benefit: Reduced monthly technology per-head cost by 50%, standardized processes for branch managers, unified and centralized sales processes, increased file sharing

Strategy

NFP believes that IT efficiency is directly linked to the company's ability to promote, protect, and grow its brand. This strategy drove the company to undergo a large internal transformational initiative to centralize and unify IT processes. NFP targeted CRM, enhanced security, networking, file sharing, and directory services, with the goal of strengthening its brand and gaining better insight into the needs of its clients. The company chose Egnyte as the anchor point for its IT transformation, building commonality across systems and enabling standard processes across its regional offices as well as embracing a hybrid cloud approach to improve interoffice collaboration between regions, reduce integration concerns, mitigate security and compliance concerns with data access and management, and protect against data loss in the event of a local or regional outage.

Implementation

NFP began the evaluation process early in 2013 and spent approximately three months evaluating solutions from the leading cloud collaboration vendors. NFP's IT leaders were steadfast about using a solution that leveraged a hybrid cloud model, which limited the technology field significantly. NFP chose Egnyte because it felt the technology provider's hybrid cloud collaboration approach best matched its needs. The company ran initial pilots by linking data sources across 5 different business units and reviewed the cost and productivity outcomes of the pilot group. This analysis took approximately 6 months, and following the conclusion of the pilot, NFP continued to roll out Egnyte across 77 additional offices.

NFP's corporate server infrastructure was already highly virtualized; thus the implementation of Egnyte simply required the creation of a virtual machine, which allowed the organization to operate its file sync and share functions in a hybrid cloud environment. Because small to medium-sized offices needed little more than a small server and larger offices already had the correct IT infrastructure, they were able to start using Egnyte seamlessly. Given that the implementation of Egnyte varied based on the size of the office, each implementation was mapped to a consistent process that ensured compliance and data governance requirements were met, and a full audit of file management structures was made available in real time.

The rollout of Egnyte is largely complete across the regional office landscape, with NFP's central IT organization now managing 2,500 active users.

Challenges

NFP's biggest technology challenge came during the evaluation stage of this initiative, where IT managers spent significant time and effort analyzing the need for and the cost impact of increasing the physical infrastructure across the organization. Because many sales offices had fewer than 10 employees and lacked IT staff and resources, a solution that improved business processes but didn't change the infrastructure paradigm was considered the most viable option.

While the company realized there were efficiency benefits that could come from a VDI deployment, or cloud-only platforms, minimizing costs and reducing business disruption were top of mind. NFP needed a tool that was cost effective, enterprise ready, HIPAA certified, and compliant with other aspects of its business and that operated in a hybrid cloud paradigm to ease the transition and encourage the adoption of enhanced collaboration functions. The solution also needed to provide data syncing to minimize the risk of data loss or business interruption in the event a regional office suffered an outage.

Benefits

The implementation of Egnyte was a core component of NFP's IT centralization strategy, and the outcome has positively impacted the company's cost structure, business performance, and employee productivity. The move toward centralized IT has helped NFP reduce its technology expense per employee per month from \$200 to \$100. By eliminating regional shadow IT initiatives, centralized management of Egnyte and its cloud-based delivery model has been significant in the reduction of technology overhead.

NFP has significantly improved collaboration across regions. The company's sales offices are now more centralized around core business processes, including standardization of sales documentation, training materials, deal tracking, and customer intelligence. Egnyte has made it easy to drive best practices around client engagement, interaction, and data storage and ultimately reduce administrative costs thanks to standardization on a single technology platform. This in turn has allowed greater client information sharing and greatly facilitated staff training. The ease of use has enabled NFP's help desk team members to focus on supporting other areas of the business.

NFP regional business leaders have been quick to drive adoption of standardized processes and documents, which in turn has helped accelerate cross-sell and upsell among its entire client base. All regional offices now use the same branded materials, creating a single brand image for the organization. Remote managers can review a broad reach of content libraries to see which folders, sales documents, and client-related investment documents are being accessed and consumed the most and gain greater insight into business and workforce productivity.

The implementation of Egnyte is also an integral part of NFP's security, audit, compliance, and data management strategy. Egnyte's reporting capabilities have allowed IT managers greater visibility into file and document management, helped identify the most active or "power" users, and provided better visibility and auditability. Tracking user ownership, access rights, and permissioning has given NFP's IT and business managers greater insight into aligning the appropriate employees with the correct levels of access to the right data, making it easier to secure positioning and ensure that all documents and files receive the right authoring decisions.

Egnyte has also been integrated with Salesforce to ensure maximum visibility of customer interactions with sales and account management staff. Documents can be sent electronically from Egnyte directly to customers for review and signature, and all movements are linked to both systems. NFP has realized significant operational efficiency from the integration, eliminating one or more manual processes, which are now fully automated. "We wanted to focus on the enterprise tools that make sense for us," says Tom Kurian, vice president of IT operations and infrastructure at NFP. "It's now more than a file server ... enabling new processes more easily."

Methodology

Information about the company and the IT transformation project outlined in this document was gathered via a direct interview with the lead project manager at NFP. Questions posed by IDC were designed to specifically capture insight into the challenges before and benefits after the implementation of Egnyte and to gain an understanding of both the efficiency benefits and the cost benefits realized from the project.

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