



SUCCESS STORY
Energy

VITAL
ENERGI

VITAL ENERGI | PROBLEM SOLVED

To provide a storage platform that could quickly generate business-critical reports, Vital Energi implemented NetApp® AFF8040 and NetApp AltaVault™ cloud-integrated storage, resulting in lower report generation time, faster performance, and easier management.

Powering Nationwide Energy Savings

Vital Energi is in the business of transforming energy consumption and reducing costs. To achieve these goals, it relies heavily on reports about system performance. However, with rapid growth in the past few years, its data storage requirements were outstripping the capacity of its storage platform. It implemented a NetApp all-flash AFF8040 and gained greater capacity and blistering performance, which in turn have led to even greater business growth.

Report generation time went from

3 hrs ▶
10 min

Runs enterprise applications up to

20x
more quickly

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 **NetApp®**

“Reports that took 3-5 hours are now generated in 10 minutes and we’re aiming to bring this down to a single digit figure. We’re blown away by the performance. There are no restrictions.”

Jon Woan
IT Manager, Vital Energi

Vital Energi designs, builds, supplies, and maintains new methods of energy generation. Founded in 2000 and with over 400 employees, the company draws on a deep well of expertise to provide compelling business cases for providing systems that deliver low-carbon, renewable heat and electricity. The company’s approach is consistently effective, and it typically wins repeat business from its client base, including health trusts and boards, universities, and industrial organizations.

Vital Energi’s services focus on two main areas: the sustainable and viable means of generating energy and the management, measurement, and reduction of energy consumption. The company also anticipates future energy demand for its clients and is able to continuously reduce clients’ carbon emissions, saving them money on their energy bills each year. Its projects are wide ranging, from waste and energy systems to commercial solar energy platforms, smart heat metering and billing, and commercial biomass boilers.

CHALLENGE

The company has experienced tremendous growth in the past few years because its energy-saving expertise and technical aptitude have become much sought after. To keep pace with this growth, the company needed to overhaul its IT infrastructure and create a platform that would help sustain and drive the business forward.

An important element of the company’s operation is the generation of business reports. Performance contracts are a central plank in its operations, guaranteeing customer reductions on energy bills, for instance. To make sure its systems are operating at optimal levels and meeting performance targets, the company needs to generate reports showing how the equipment is performing and where savings are being made.

The reports currently analyze 5–6TB of SQL data, and this amount is growing at the rate of around 1TB every four months. At the same time, the company regularly generates business reports from systems such as Microsoft Dynamics NAV. To sustain this level

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Reduction of time required generating business-critical reports from 3-5 hours to 10 minutes
- Much faster performance, leading to faster report generation and the identification of new business opportunities
- Cost-effective and secure cloud storage for data backup and archiving
- Easy management that lifts operational burden from IT team
- First-class support that understands the business

of reporting and accelerate report generation, the company needed a new storage platform. The company was previously using NetApp FAS2552 and Flash Pool™ intelligent caching, but as the business as grown, so have its datasets.

Five years earlier, Vital Energi began using NetApp storage, initially for storage virtualization. Jon Woan, IT manager, Vital Energi, explains, “These reports deliver massive business value and are a huge part of our market differentiation. And so providing a new storage platform is an investment in the business. We had a very good relationship with NetApp and our IT partner Gardner Systems. We wanted to continue with this and consulted with Gardner on a solution based on NetApp.”

SOLUTION

Following the consultations with Gardner, Vital Energi decided to deploy the NetApp AFF8040 to increase performance. Woan explains, “Gardner Systems are a deep source of knowledge for us. In this space it can be very difficult to keep up with what goes on. There can be big changes in just a few

months. But Gardner provides us with this insight.”

Paul Stringfellow, technical director, Gardner Systems says, “We are a NetApp Gold Partner. We understand how NetApp technologies are developing and what Vital Energi needed. The NetApp AFF8040 was a perfect fit. This platform has been designed as an enterprise-class, all-flash array that dovetails high performance and flexibility with best-in-class data management.”

This fusion of features offers a range of benefits that reflect Vital Energi’s needs. For instance, the AFF8040 accelerates the business because it is able to run enterprise applications up to 20 times more quickly.

At the same time, the flexibility of the AFF8040 complemented the

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WATCH THE VIDEO



Jon Woan, IT manager, talks about the strengths of NetApp Data Fabric in allowing Vital Energi to move data whether on-premises or in the cloud.

company’s IT infrastructure and data center transformation by integrating seamlessly into the infrastructure with nondisruptive scaling and software-defined access to flash.

Other key points included reduced power consumption and rack space, lower support costs, and the ability to set up and serve data within 10 minutes.

Woan says, “It was clear that we would get a tremendous performance boost as well as lower costs and power consumption. These are important points for the business, particularly the performance improvements.” At the same time, the company also decided to implement NetApp AltaVault cloud-integrated storage, which provides cloud-based backup and archiving at a much lower cost than on-premises platforms.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Accelerated performance

The impact on the speed of report generation has been striking. Woan explains, “Sometimes it would take 3-5 hours to produce a report. But now business users can generate

reports in minutes. Reports that took 3 hours or more are now generated in 10 minutes,  and we're aiming to bring this down to a single-digit figure. We're blown away by the performance. There are no restrictions."

New business opportunities

Because of its blistering performance, the NetApp AFF8040 has provided Vital Energi with new business opportunities. A great example of this would be that it can take readings from smart meters in homes, analyze the data, and quickly produce reports.  This allows the company to see which meters are not functioning and report the faults back to the meter manufacturers. From the residents' point of view, this predictive failure model enables them to save even more on their energy bills. From Vital Energi's view, it's a new tool

to leverage even greater savings for clients.

Effortless management

There are many features on the NetApp platform that enable Vital Energi to focus on its core business and make sure it does not get side-tracked into storage management issues. Woan says, "We can clone, restore, and back up databases with a simple click. It's effortless and takes the weight off the operations team, who can move their focus on to core tasks, confident that data storage and backup requirements are taken care of."

Meeting compliance demands

NetApp AltaVault is helping the company meet mandatory data backup requirements and has the ability to easily scale as demand grows. "We need to retain data for seven years, including meter readings. To enable this, we could have

moved to a big expensive platform like EMC, but, following a proof of concept, we realized that as long as we have the speed in the pipes, AltaVault can do the same job at a much lower price, and, importantly, it's secured with robust encryption," says Woan.

Sterling support

The technology performance to one side, Woan says NetApp support is second to none: "Support is absolutely spot on, and because we are running our production data, we need this. If we have any issues, we get immediate support that is cognizant about the importance of our storage to our business."

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

NETAPP PRODUCTS

[NetApp AFF8040](#)

[NetApp AltaVault](#)

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