

# NORTHSTAR TRADE FINANCE INC.

EMC VNXe provides increased performance, reliability, and affordability to a mid-sized financial services company



## ESSENTIALS

### Challenges

- The legacy environment was nearing end of life
- There was no data storage room left
- There were performance issues and a lack of redundancy

### Solution

- EMC VNXe
- VMware
- EMC Unisphere

### Key benefits

- Reliable and affordable
- Performance increases of three to four times compared to legacy systems
- Easy-to-manage: new virtual machines (VMs) can be created in minutes rather than hours
- Increased productivity through in-built, easy-to-learn and use management wizards
- Integrated VMware technology supports virtualized environments; applications can be quickly virtualized for higher performance
- Thin Provisioning to maximize storage utilization
- VDI support
- Quick and easy installation in minutes, with no deep IT knowledge required

## OVERVIEW

NORTHSTAR Trade Finance Inc. was established to support Canadian exporters, offering financing to credit-worthy buyers of Canadian goods and services. With its head office in Vancouver, B.C., and trading offices in Toronto and Luxembourg, the company assumes the financial risk on behalf of its customers, allowing them to offer financing in support of their bids for small and medium-size export transactions around the world.

Customer, transactional, and financial data is of critical importance to company operations. Until recently, the data was held primarily on legacy storage systems. However, that IT infrastructure was suffering from a variety of performance issues, and the older technology could not keep pace with ever-growing data storage requirements. Additionally, management of the storage infrastructure was time consuming and complex.

## THE CHALLENGE: PERFORMANCE AND RELIABILITY

NORTHSTAR Technical Analyst, Pardave Lehry, describes the challenges that his company faced with its legacy storage infrastructure.

“Our legacy environment was four years old, at end of life, and we were having problems,” says Lehry. “We were out of data storage room to the point where I simply did not have any more space even for the addition of simple applications. Performance was also an issue: our old system was Windows® storage based, and hadn’t been patched in four years. That meant that anytime I wanted to patch or update, I’d have to go off-line, reboot, and in doing so, bring the entire system down. For instance, we were running Microsoft® SQL Server® within a virtual machine environment, and it was prone to fail. I would have to re-boot twice a week. Performance was definitely an issue.”

Lehry also notes that he was worried about the lack of redundancy and backup systems within the older solution.

“My stress level was beyond anything I’d experienced before. We had a tape backup system which I’d run every day, with no redundancy, only a single VM host, and no failover capability. There were simply too many points of failure within the old system.”

Ease of management also concerned him. The legacy solution had no in-built management interface and creating a new VM, for example, involved many steps and required accessing a number of different programs, which could take up to four hours.

“I’m the only person managing our IT systems and I look after our infrastructure not only in our Vancouver office, but also in our locations in Toronto and Luxembourg,” states Lehry. “The older system was difficult and complex to manage and I knew there had to be a better way.”

Lehry approached EMC® Partner CDW and outlined the company’s requirements, which included high performance, reliability, ease of management and price which was a key factor.

“I had already done some research about EMC and EMC VNXe® and I had an inkling that we’d go with them,” says Lehry. “CDW validated my research.”

## THE SOLUTION: EMC VNXe

Lehry’s experience with his next-generation unified storage platform from EMC has been positive.

“Purchasing the VNXe has given me peace-of-mind and let me catch my breath,” he says. “Getting the VNXe up and running was easy. I did everything myself. VNXe is plug-and-play. I don’t know how much easier it gets than that. I didn’t even have to read a manual because VNXe has a very intuitive management interface. I plugged it in, hooked up a laptop, and got it going in 30 minutes. It was that simple. And the performance it offers is amazing and affordable.”

Lehry quickly migrated NORTHSTAR’s virtual machines, as well as other databases and applications, to the company’s new EMC storage solution. Today, he is confident in the company’s IT infrastructure.

“We were running 14 virtual machines, and a wide range of critical applications including Accpac, Microsoft Exchange, and SQL Server on our old infrastructure,” he states. “But as I mentioned, there were too many points of failure and no redundancy. With EMC VNXe, my stress levels are back to manageable levels in the green bar.”

## INTEGRATED VMWARE FOR QUICK VIRTUALIZATION

Lehry is enthusiastic about VNXe’s integrated VMware® capabilities, as well as its virtualization Wizard.

“I like the Wizard approach that VNXe offers,” says Lehry. “In our previous environment, you needed to really know what you were doing. It was confusing at times. For instance, if you were creating a new virtual disk in this environment, you couldn’t create the host using the same tools. But EMC Unisphere™ is intuitive and I can configure storage volumes very quickly. What used to take hours within our legacy environment takes less than 20 minutes on the VNXe.”

Lehry also notes that application virtualization is easy, and he is highly impressed with VNXe’s general performance.

“I upgraded to SQL Server 2008, and the virtualization of that application was a piece of cake,” he says. “In addition, having created the virtual machine, I was blown away by how fast VNXe moves data. I had provisioned an 80 Gigabyte VM, and I expected the migration to take a few hours, but it was done in three minutes. I’m amazed by how fast this is. Compared to the old system, I’m seeing performance increases of three to four times faster.”

Moreover, VNXe offers Lehry and his company the flexibility and availability his business requires.

“In the old system, I would have to run multiple applications on one VM, but VNXe gives me the flexibility to expand our VM capabilities,” he explains. “Now I run one VM per application. Each VM is obviously separate, so I don’t have to bring critical applications down if I have to do a re-boot.”

“VNXe makes my job easier because I don’t have to worry about virtual machines or storage going down,” he adds. “I can quickly thin provision with VNXe to maximize storage utilization and performance, and I don’t have to worry about running out of storage room.”

## VNXe: SUPPORTING DESKTOP VIRTUALIZATION

VNXe supports desktop virtualization, a fact that is of particular interest to Lehry.

“We have been using Citrix, and I’m planning to move it onto VNXe in a couple of weeks,” says Lehry. “I’m expecting a performance increase when I do. That said, I’m starting to look at SharePoint to replace our older Citrix system. Whatever system we choose, EMC VNXe is an

optimum storage environment for VDI. I simply wouldn't have been able to roll out a Virtual Desktop environment onto the old system. In the future, and as NORTHSTAR continues to expand, we plan to move out other VDI application into our smaller offices, all supported by VNXe."

## A SEAMLESS PROCESS

Lehry was also impressed with the EMC sales team and the personal commitment that they provided.

"The day I started researching the new storage solution, I received a call from the EMC enterprise sales associate responsible for Western Canada," he explains. "She told me our EMC area rep would get in touch with me. He responded in days, came into our office, addressed all our concerns, was very forthcoming, and honestly answered my questions. I recall him saying 'I'm not a technical guy but I will try and answer everything I can and those I can't, I will get answers for.' Very impressive."

"Throughout the entire sales process, I was never pressured," Lehry adds. "When I met the EMC technical sales consultant, it was the same. He listened attentively and made a recommendation immediately on what would fit our needs. After the order was placed with EMC Partner CDW, he contacted me asking if we had received the unit. When I told him we were still waiting and that it would take about two weeks, he quickly followed up and even informed me when the unit was off the line and about to be shipped."

A representative from CDW notes how the strong relationship between EMC and its partners resulted in a valuable solution for NORTHSTAR.

"We have a long standing and positive working relationship with EMC," he says. "Because we had worked with NORTHSTAR in the past, the EMC team brought us into the deal and we were able to provide a new level of value. Working together we accomplished our objectives: satisfy the customer and deliver a first-rate solution."

## A RECOMMENDATION FOR EMC VNXe

Lehry has already recommended EMC and EMC VNXe and says he will continue to do so.

"VNXe is easy-to-manage, offers high reliability and performance, and is affordable," he explains. "Our exec team has noted an increase in performance and reliability, but no one has said much else—that's a good thing because people only comment when something goes wrong. What's more, the level of customer service I received from my EMC sales team was phenomenal. I was expecting the process to be painful and I was dreading the thought of having to deal with pushy sales people. However, working with them was very comforting. At no point did I feel pressured to make a purchase. There were no surprises after the order was purchased. All costs were presented up front and we knew exactly what we were going to pay."

Perhaps the ultimate testimonial that Lehry offers is this: "With EMC VNXe, I can sleep at night."

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Pardave Lehry  
Technical Analyst  
NORTHSTAR Trade Finance Inc.

## CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local representative or authorized reseller—or visit us at [www.EMC.com](http://www.EMC.com).

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