

# PROGRAMMING SUCCESS INTO THE BUSINESS

A leading retailer in France moves to software-defined storage and a hyper-converged solution, giving staff 83 per cent faster access to data for better business decisions



Retail

France

## Business needs

Aubert wanted to make its business more agile to drive continued growth, so it started searching for an IT solution to enable greater operational flexibility.

## Solutions at a glance

- [Software-Defined Storage](#)
  - [Dell EMC XC Series 720XD web-scale hyper-converged appliance](#)
  - [Nutanix™ Distributed File System](#)
- [Data Center Virtualization](#)
  - [Dell EMC PowerEdge R630 and R730 servers with Intel® Xeon® processors](#)
  - [Dell EMC Networking N4000 and N2000 switches](#)

## Business results

- Staff are more effective with 83 per cent faster access to business data
- Website visitors see pages served twice as fast at peak times
- Company can support 50 per cent growth in virtual machines
- Business easily handles 20 per cent data growth a year

*“Quicker access to business data means better decision-making, and with our Dell EMC XC web-scale hyper-converged appliance, we’ve increased access speeds dramatically.”*

Julien Navarro,  
CEO, NAOS (IT services provider to Aubert)

As we enter the era of software-defined IT, companies are taking a close look at their infrastructures. What's clear is that organisations can deliver more powerful, flexible and cost-effective operations through virtualization software and software-defined data centres.

Aubert, in France, wanted to prepare its IT infrastructure for the future. The company is a leader in clothing and other retail items for children, and its website attracts more than 25 million visits a year. The ecommerce side of the organisation is just one sales channel for the business, which also has 200 high-street stores in France and across Europe.

## Time to change for the better

In its existing state, the company's infrastructure wasn't ready to cope with an expanding ecommerce operation. The environment was a mixture of vendor solutions, including servers from IBM. The majority of the key applications – including the Microsoft Dynamics™ enterprise resource planning (ERP) system – were virtualized.

The major challenge was that the infrastructure had come to the end of its lifecycle. There were frequent performance issues, and employees complained about waiting up to 12 seconds for the ERP system to respond to a command. Worse still, visitors to the ecommerce site found that it ran slowly during busy periods because of data bottlenecks. The system wasn't scalable and couldn't support any increases in virtualized applications or data.

## Standardising on future-ready IT

To put things right, Aubert turned to NAOS, an IT services firm created by Aubert to deliver shared IT services to the Aubert Group. NAOS CEO Julien Navarro says: "We looked to standardise our IT and create a web-scale infrastructure to support Aubert over the years to come. We wanted to fix performance issues, but also ensure our replacement environment had the scalability to meet our future needs, including 20 per cent data growth a year."

NAOS requested tenders from leading IT solution providers, including IBM and Dell EMC. The proposal from Dell

EMC was submitted by Dell EMC partner ASPC, a well-established IT provider in north-east France. Indeed, ASPC had worked with the customer before, assisting with the purchase of a number of Dell OptiPlex desktops and Dell Precision workstations. The ASPC proposal differed from those of other vendors by focusing on convergence. As IT trends go, convergence is at the heart of the future-ready data centre. It makes IT systems easier to set up and manage, and NAOS was keen to know more.

## Convergence is the way forward

ASPC proposed the Dell EMC XC Series of web-scale hyper-converged appliances, including Dell EMC PowerEdge servers with Intel® Xeon® processors. A software-defined storage solution, the Dell EMC XC Series brings together Dell EMC storage and computing with Nutanix™ web-scale software to deliver a high-performance, scalable, virtualized environment. It seamlessly integrates server and storage systems, and comes with extensive automation and monitoring. "We quickly saw that this was a durable, expandable system that could grow with our virtualized IT. No risks of oversizing on processing power or storage blocks. And the simple pay-as-you-grow model suited us," comments Navarro.

As discussions between NAOS and ASPC progressed, the Dell EMC Nutanix software-defined storage solution became part of a much larger infrastructure. Along with the appliances, NAOS chose Dell EMC Networking N4000 switches with 10 Gigabit Ethernet (GbE) connectivity for the data centre and Dell EMC Networking N2000 switches for the network edge. Since not all applications were virtualized, NAOS also wanted a small number of servers to support this environment. It selected Dell EMC PowerEdge R630 and R730 servers with Intel Xeon processors.

## Making success continuous

From the outset, NAOS told ASPC it wanted to develop a business continuity plan that could measure up to its future-ready data centre. To this end, the Dell partner proposed the Dell DR4100 disk backup appliance for rapid backups and restores. Navarro says: "We looked at everything, from the solutions up to the responsiveness of

ASPC and Dell EMC. The performance and modularity of Nutanix were compelling. Furthermore, we had experience of Dell EMC and ASPC, and had a lot of confidence in their services.”

NAOS and ASPC collaborated on the deployment which took little over a month. There were no problems during the implementation phase, and NAOS was very satisfied with the work. “We stayed on schedule,” says Navarro. “We also received on-the-job training so we could start operating the Dell EMC solution from day one.”

## Better decision-making with 83 per cent faster access

Soon after the Dell EMC solution went live, personnel reported a significant improvement in performance, especially of the virtualized ERP system. The Microsoft Dynamics solution, supported by the Dell EMC XC web-scale hyper-converged appliance running Nutanix, was much faster. Staff saw commands responded to in no more than two seconds – around 83 per cent faster than before. Says Navarro: “Quicker access to business data means better decision-making, and with our Dell EMC XC web-scale hyper-converged appliance, we’ve increased access speeds dramatically.”

## Customer experience hits new heights with web pages twice as fast

Likewise, visitors to the Aubert website enjoy quick access to web pages regardless of the amount of site traffic. As soon as the virtualized web servers were migrated to the Dell EMC XC Series appliance, issues with data bottlenecks were eliminated. NAOS recorded a two-fold increase in the speed of pages loading at the same time as an increase of 20 per cent in website traffic.

Navarro says: “Both personnel and website customers have seen a marked improvement in IT performance with the deployment of our Dell EMC solution, not least the Dell EMC XC web-scale hyper-converged appliance. We can also maintain these gains by adding more performance and capacity to the appliance as we need to.”

## There’s no stopping progress

Navarro can be confident about the continued performance gains he has seen because of the Dell EMC XC Series architecture. The solution offers hard disk drives, as well as flash-based storage with Intel Xeon processors, for rapid access to stored data. In addition, the Nutanix Distributed File System (NDFS) allows IT staff to thin provision storage across the different capacity drives for enhanced flexibility. The compute performance of the XC Series is provided by 13th-generation Dell EMC PowerEdge servers with multiple RAM configurations to meet the needs of each client. In the case of Aubert, key business data is cache based to maximise application performance and access speeds. Comments Navarro: “We found the Dell EMC Nutanix XC Series hyper-converged appliance to be very adaptable. It was simple to find a configuration for our specific business requirements.”

## Business is ready for 50 per cent growth in virtual machines

As with many organisations, Aubert expects its number of virtual machines to increase. This has major implications in terms of scaling the compute, storage and network capacity of the core infrastructure. However, NAOS believes it has all these areas covered with the Dell EMC solution. The Dell EMC XC Series appliance is designed for highly scalable environments just like that of Aubert and many others. Navarro says: “We predict a 30 and 50 per cent increase in virtual servers in the next five years alone. We’re in a great position to handle that increase without any significant growth to our IT footprint or administration with our hyper-converged Dell EMC solution.”

## Accommodating 20 per cent data growth year-on-year

Along with the upsurge in virtual machines, the company expects the volume of data to grow even more dramatically. It predicts a 20 per cent year-on-year increase for the foreseeable future in line with business growth and

virtualization. For this reason, moving to a software-defined storage solution made perfect sense. It takes virtualized storage to a new level, delivering greater automation, manageability and scalability. “We have peace of mind that we can meet our increasing storage needs without a corresponding rise in costs thanks to our Dell EMC XC Series appliance with Nutanix for software-defined storage,” says Navarro.

## IT team boosts performance with 30 per cent greater IT efficiency

As a result of the upgraded infrastructure, Aubert has seen a significant increase in IT efficiency. The IT team has automated many routine management tasks to free up its time, and this is largely due to the hyper-converged Dell EMC XC Series appliance and PowerEdge servers with Intel® Xeon® processors. What’s more, it has the assistance of Dell EMC ProSupport Mission Critical with 4-hour on-

site assistance to help resolve any issues. “Our IT team has cut management time by 30 per cent through our Dell EMC hyper-converged solution, enabling them to dedicate more time to working on improving our IT services still further,” says Navarro.

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