



HCI and data protection modernize company's IT.

Noble Foods simplified management and data protection of their VMware environment with hyperconverged infrastructure, integrated backup software and replication to their DR site.



CONSTOR SOLUTIONS

NOBLE
FOODS



Food manufacturer/supplier

United Kingdom

Business needs

Noble Foods needed to modernize their data centers and disaster recovery capability with a complete solution that would simplify managing their VMware environment on-site and in remote offices. As they were growing and developing new products and brands, they wanted assurance that their new solution would 'future proof' the business for at least five years.

Solutions at a glance

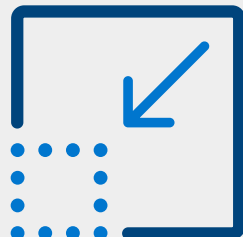
- [Data Protection Suite](#)
- [RecoverPoint for Virtual Machines](#)
- [PowerProtect DD](#)
- [VxRail](#)
- [VMware](#)

Business results

- Supports and enables business growth
- Reduces storage footprint, compute costs and environmental costs
- Eliminates the need for manual updates, freeing staff time to focus on innovation
- Enables snapshot-based recoveries in minutes
- Streamlines backups from remote offices

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Noble Foods is a leading supplier of fresh food brands to major retailers and consumers in the United Kingdom. They are active in several businesses related to food production, from farming – with 14 rearing farms for hens – to packaging and selling eggs, to selling a premium dessert brand with a large market share in the UK, France and Germany.

“Noble Foods is the UK’s leading vertically integrated egg business,” says Andrew Sharman, Group Head of IT at Noble Foods. “We work with a network of farms, packing centers, feed mills and egg and hen processors across the country ensuring quality, traceability and economies of scale. We needed to modernize to stay competitive in a challenging market.”

As a satisfied client-side Dell customer for nearly 20 years, when Noble Foods sought to refresh their compute, storage and data protection solution, they included Dell Technologies in their vendor evaluation.

“We were able to migrate all the services to the Dell EMC solution seamlessly, without any interruption in service.”

Martin Mailes,
Infrastructure Team Manager,
Noble Foods

“Hen’s Don’t Stop Laying Eggs”

Most large firms these days operate a 24/7 business, and in this case the need for round-the-clock operations has its basis in Nature herself. “Hens don’t stop laying eggs,” says Sharman. “We need to feed our hens and collect and grade their eggs 365 days a year. We have one of the UK’s largest premium desserts brands to support and protect as well.”

In addition to wanting to simplify and centralize managing the data and applications, Noble wanted to make sure their

data was protected, readily available and quickly recoverable. “We have a lot of our data that resides in multiple systems and formats,” says Sharman, “It could take numerous hours to back up and recover systems and information. The goal was to reduce recovery time to minutes and increase the retention of online backups to at least 12 months.”

Siloes That Wouldn’t Feed Company Growth

For their backend infrastructure, Noble had partnered with IBM for decades, along with Veritas NetBackup for data protection. “It was kind of siloed elements,” says Sharman, “not just in terms of what we bought and installed, but in how we managed it.”

Noble has a 100% VMware environment within its primary and secondary data centers. Additionally, they have traditional servers in remote offices supporting their factories. According to Sharman, they found out early on in their experience with their IBM solution that capacity and performance would be an issue as the company grew.

For their technology refresh, Noble wanted a well-aligned infrastructure that would enable business growth, simplify operations and provide a complete data protection solution that they could use to protect the data from their remote offices as well as their primary data center. And they wanted their new solution to be future proofed, with the capacity to perform well for them for five years at a minimum.

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Andrew Sharman,
Group Head of IT,
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Grading the Choices, Feeling the Love

After an initial evaluation that included IBM, Noble Foods narrowed the vendor field down to two finalists: Dell Technologies and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise. From there they did a deeper comparison. “We used a scoring system to compare Dell and HPE for different areas of each solution,” Sharman says. “It took into account a number of factors – not just the technology, but the whole process, from start to finish.” Noble also looked at cost, and at the end of the evaluation decided there were major advantages to the Dell solution.

Additionally, there were some intangibles in Dell’s favor. “Compare it to buying a car,” says Sharman. “I can go to any dealership and buy a car, but I want to feel the love. In this case, I want to feel that the people we’re working with understand our business, want our business, have got the right technical expertise to understand what we do, and then relate that to the products and services they have. We were introduced to Constor Solutions, a converged IT solution provider, and they recommended Dell EMC VxRail and Data Domain appliances, with Data Protection Suite for VMware and RecoverPoint for Virtual Machines.”

An Award-Winning Partner Who Understands HCI

Noble worked with Constor on the design and implementation of the new solution. As both a Dell Technologies Platinum Partner and a VMware Advanced Partner – and Dell EMC Services Delivery Partner of the Year in 2018 – Constor had the specialist skills and technical expertise to provide just what Noble needed. Says Martin Mailes, Noble Foods’s infrastructure team manager, “Constor was a good fit for us for the speed in which we wanted to attack this refresh. And going forward, they have supported us in the background with any changes and training.”

From Siloes to Simplicity

From the start, their new infrastructure has provided Noble Foods with the simplicity they were seeking. “We were able to migrate all the services to the Dell EMC solution seamlessly, without any interruption in service,” notes Mailes.

“Adopting VMware eight years ago greatly simplified our life,” says Sharman. “The fact that our VxRail is integrated directly with VMware is a massive plus. Dell EMC hardware and software work seamlessly with VMware, so we don’t have to worry, ‘is it going to work, has it been tested, is it going to break the solution we’ve got?’”

“We have single pane of glass management through vCenter, and the monitoring of the environment is taken care of by Constor and Dell. We’re alerted when issues or faults are identified, as opposed to having to manually alert IBM in the past. There’s a proactive element we didn’t have before that provides peace of mind. On a normal day, it’s much simpler,” Sharman concludes, “because it’s all managed in the same place. If there are any issues, we have a single point of contact.”

Noble uses their VxRail systems to host their production and DR workloads, running 183 VMs totaling 96TB. Data Protection Suite backs up their VMs daily and Recover Point for Virtual Machines (RP4VMs) is continuously replicating their VMs to their DR site. They use DD Boost to reduce their backup window. All their policies and proxies are deployed automatically by Data Protection Suite.

Currently Noble Foods and Constor are planning to deploy VMware proxies to Noble’s remote offices to back up their data using Data Protection Suite. Says Suman Ramesh-Babu, Technical Director at Constor, “Without DD Boost and Data Protection Suite there would be no way we could back up the remote office data over the available bandwidth.”

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Suman Ramesh Babu,
Technical Director,
Constor Solutions

VxRail and VDI

Noble runs three ERP systems on VxRail, two versions of Microsoft Dynamics NAV and Dynamics AX, plus SQL databases and monitoring systems. They also run Citrix Virtual Apps, publishing 80% of their desktop apps to 800 users.

“We’re a multi-site operation,” says Sharman. “When we centralized all our core services and data over 10 years ago, high bandwidth was very costly. So we implemented Citrix to deal with that. The whole Office suite and all our ERP apps are pushed through Citrix and published to the desktop as an application, not a published desktop.”

“Our data is safer now... with RP4VMs. Before, all we had was the previous night’s backups. Now we have all these additional snapshots throughout the day.”

Martin Mailes,
Infrastructure Team Manager,
Noble Foods

Currently Noble is building a new Citrix environment with automated intelligence to bring up and shut down machines as needed, “which fits in lovely with VMware,” Sharman notes. VxRail enables them to run the new Citrix environment alongside the existing one seamlessly, without impacting resources.

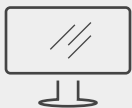
A Quick Win

Their Dell EMC solution with hyperconverged infrastructure and comprehensive data protection has proven its worth to the Noble Foods team. They anticipate savings in storage footprint, power consumption and tape backup. The solution has also provided immeasurable peace of mind.

“Our data is safer now,” says Mailes. “Especially with RP4VMs. Before, all we had was the previous night’s backups. Now we have additional snapshots throughout the day and can recover to any point in time.”

Case in point: Recently one of Noble’s virtual appliances that enables remote access failed at 5:30 pm, right when staff were walking out the door for the evening. “We spoke to Constor, and it turned out we had a snapshot of that system from about half an hour ago that we could recover,” says Sharman. “It took just minutes for the service to be back up and running. That was a quick win and a great example of the technology straightaway.

“Plus, we’ve looked and seen that in Gartner’s Magic Quadrant, Dell Technologies is in the top right, which is where you want to be. That’s where we want to be, in terms of the technology we use to run our business.”



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