

# Cricut Achieves 3x SAP Performance Boost by Switching to Nimble Storage

**Nimble Enables Industrial-Grade Manufacturer to Simplify Storage Management, Speed Deployments, and Improve Disaster Recovery**

## Cricut

Cricut is a leading manufacturer of personal electronic die-cutting machines, used for cutting paper, felt, vinyl, fabric, and other materials for scrapbooking and other artistic projects. Founded over 50 years ago, Cricut's award-winning tools are inspiring creativity for millions of artists and crafters located around the world.

Cricut's main data center is located in South Jordan, Utah. The company also uses a co-lo facility in Lindon, UT for the company's public-facing website. Cricut relies on a suite of SAP applications, including the SAP materials management, supply chain, and financial modules. MS SQL Server 2008 database is used for querying the SAP modules. The environment is 100 percent virtualized using the VMware vSphere 5.1 hypervisor, on HP Dual Core ProLiant Blade servers and NetApp 2040 storage arrays.

## Needing More Capacity

Tom Patterson is the director of IT at Cricut. He is responsible for stabilizing and growing the company's direct-to-consumer web presence (cricut.com), its end-user application (craftroom.cricut.com), as well as all internal business processing infrastructure. One of Patterson's IT goals for 2013 was to increase storage capacity at the co-lo facility. He thought about adding more NetApp arrays, but the management complexity and poor performance for the company's core SAP applications convinced him to look at other storage options for the co-lo facility.

## Choosing Nimble

Patterson was first introduced to Nimble when he received an invite from a VAR to attend a demo. The VAR raved about the features and high performance of the Nimble arrays, convincing Patterson to give it a try. "The tipping point that brought us to Nimble was a statement made by a different VAR who was trying to sell us more NetApp arrays," noted Patterson. "When we asked for specific reasons why we shouldn't go with Nimble, his only response was, 'Well, they are new.' There were no technical issues or product limitations he could identify. That alone, convinced me to give Nimble some serious consideration." Patterson then purchased the company's first Nimble array for the co-lo facility in 2013.

## Solving SAP Performance Issues

"The SAP benchmark we rely on is called the 'average response time dialogue' — which refers to the amount of time between sending a request to the SAP system and receiving an answer upon completion," Patterson explained. "With NetApp, response time was always well above the targeted threshold of 1,000U. Our end users were complaining about the poor performance of the SAP modules nearly every day. After seeing Nimble's great performance and ease of use for our website at the co-lo facility, we decided to purchase an additional Nimble array to address the SAP performance issues."

Patterson moved the SAP modules from NetApp onto the Nimble array during production hours. "I simply did a VMware Storage vMotion, where I just dragged and dropped the

## Storage Profile: Cricut

**Industry:** Manufacturing

**Location:** South Jordan, Utah

### IT Challenges

- Response time for SAP requests was inadequate
- Storage management was complex and time-consuming
- Additional storage was needed for new public-facing website at co-lo facility

### Solution

- Storage: Nimble CS440 and CS460 arrays
- Applications: SAP
- Database: MS SQL
- Hypervisor: VMware vSphere 5.1
- Servers: HP Dual Core ProLiant Blades

### Benefits

- Obtained 3x performance improvement for SAP modules
- Reduced storage deployment time from 4 days to 2 hours
- Eliminated need for dedicated storage admin and extensive training
- Decreased restoration time from 2 hours to 10 minutes, improving disaster recovery



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SAP VM onto Nimble,” Patterson explained. “The average response time for SAP requests immediately dropped from 1,400U on NetApp’s product to under 400U on the Nimble array. Our SAP users went from wanting to hang me, to wanting to thank me!”

## Decreasing Restoration Time

Cricut is now replicating data between the two company data center sites. “We didn’t have adequate backup capabilities before Nimble,” admitted Patterson. “If we needed to restore data in our old NetApp environment, we had to use the backup tapes, which was very time-consuming. With Nimble, our restoration time went from well over two hours to less than 10 minutes. We can easily restore individual files, tablespaces, applications, and even email messages quickly for our users. When we have questions about data that might have changed, we just go back to a previous snapshot, make a zero-copy clone, turn it on, look at it off-line, and then when we are done with it, we can just throw it away. It’s an amazingly fast and efficient process with Nimble.”

## Simplifying Management

“The ease of management and flexibility we get with Nimble is simply fantastic,” according to Patterson. “It takes a lot of specialized training to manage the NetApp environment. It required different licenses, multiple software layers, and a range of complex skillsets. Anytime we wanted to touch the old arrays, we had to get our NetApp storage admin or call in our VAR to help us on the systems. In contrast, Nimble has a very short learning curve. After just 10 minutes of instruction, we were good to go. My helpdesk guy is actually working on the Nimble now. I never could have done that with NetApp.”

## Accelerating New Deployments

“We occasionally have to create new transient test environments from scratch,” noted Patterson. “We tried that once before with NetApp, with very little success. All we did was turn the NetApp array off, and then turn it back on. But it didn’t work — we had to reconfigure everything. We eventually called in a NetApp specialist to help us get it working, but it was still four days before it was usable again. It was a completely different experience with Nimble. We went from opening the cardboard, moving our production workloads onto it, and we were back in business in about two hours. It was absolutely amazing.”

## A Complete Solution

“Another thing I like about Nimble is that everything is included with the initial license,” Patterson concluded. “With NetApp, everything is sold à la carte. If I had wanted to implement replication, I would’ve had to go back and make another pitch for why I needed more software, and do the whole budgeting ‘song and dance’ again. With Nimble, everything I need is already included in the price of the array. Nimble is easy, it’s fast, it’s cost-effective, and it just works.”



211 River Oaks Parkway, San Jose, CA 95134  
Phone: 408-432-9600; 877-364-6253  
Email: [info@nimblestorage.com](mailto:info@nimblestorage.com)  
[www.nimblestorage.com](http://www.nimblestorage.com)



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