

## Nimble Hits the Sweet Spot for QSL

Queensland Sugar Limited (QSL) works on behalf of seven major millers and approximately 4,000 Australian sugar growers, helping them to build sustainable business partnerships with sugar refiners in the Asia-Pacific region. The organisation manages the majority of Australia's raw sugar exports, operates six bulk sugar terminals in Queensland, and through its integrated marketing and export system, delivers pricing transparency, stability, and optimal returns for millers and growers. For international customers, QSL offers an end-to-end supply chain solution that ensures reliable, consistent supply of Australian premium raw sugar.

### A Sophisticated Technology Infrastructure

Salvo Spina, QSL's Manager Information and Communications Technology, oversees a sophisticated IT infrastructure spanning seven sites including the Brisbane head office and six bulk sugar terminals along the Queensland coast.

Most of the computing and storage infrastructure, as well as corporate systems such as finance, human resources, marketing, and logistics are located in Brisbane. An administrative network connects head office to the ports utilising the Citrix XenApp application and provides staff with access to key applications. The network also supports process control automation for tasks such as remote management of the conveyor belt operations that load sugar into storage and onto the ships at each bulk sugar terminal.

From a staff perspective, Spina says, "Every one of our 150 users has some sort of device that they load a Citrix session on, from wherever they are. Their work and all of their information is stored in the data centre on our storage system. This means latency and speed of storage are critical."

### Seeking New Storage for Better Performance

For much of the past decade, QSL relied on IBM storage devices. Although the devices were not considered particularly fast, Spina says they were reliable. What's more, there were proximity benefits as IBM's offices were located within the same building as QSL.

Unfortunately, Spina admits, "Whenever we did a benchmark evaluation of the storage, it showed the storage system was slow." Eventually, to solve the problem IBM recommended upgrading to a newly-released storage device, one with compression to enable better storage efficiencies.

Unfortunately, the change resolved nothing. "We'd always had problems with performance on the Citrix network and after performing detailed analysis of the new device, we finally worked out the performance bottleneck in our network was the storage," Spina notes. After two years of trying to make it work efficiently, Spina decided the IBM device had to be replaced.

While considering alternatives, Spina came across a presentation by Nimble Storage at an industry conference and was impressed by what he heard about the Nimble architecture. "For anyone who understands the problem of network storage, their approach is spot on. After talking to some of the people at Nimble, I decided to give their technology a go."

### Replication to Minimise Risks from Natural Disasters

In October 2014, QSL deployed two Nimble CS460G storage arrays. One was located in the head office while the second was set up at the off-site data centre. The two devices were connected by a 10Gb-per-second link to enable real time replication of data.

Storage Profile:  
Queensland Sugar Limited



#### Customer Challenges

- Growing performance bottlenecks on the incumbent storage network

#### Solution

- Two Nimble CS460G storage arrays

#### Business Benefits

- Robust replication helps to minimise risk and gives stakeholders confidence in organisation's ability to keep operating
- Ten times boost in performance speed
- Consumes half the rack space used by the previous solution — a factor that is helping to reduce costs at the external data centre

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Manager Information and  
Communications Technology,  
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“So if we have any problems, we can pick data off either device and keep going,” Spina states. In a state where cyclones regularly affect port operations and floods can occur at any time, the replication helps to minimise risk and gives stakeholders confidence in QSL’s ability to keep operating.

## Pre-Configured for Cisco UCS

Deployment was carried out by QSL’s long-term outsourcing partner, NewBase, with support and input from Nimble and Cisco.

“We installed a Cisco UCS (Unified Computing System) which comes with a pre-configured design for working with the Nimble,” Spina explains. “So we had NewBase working very closely with Nimble, who provided support all along the installation path. And we also had engineers from Nimble and Cisco making sure that the arrays were installed correctly and performing to the right standards.”

## Latency Improves by an Order of Magnitude

On the day the Nimble arrays went live, Spina says, “Our performance problems went away. It was instant. In IT you never get any praise, but we stopped getting complaints.

“We still have the same amount of storage and it is at a comparable price, but the speed — latency — is over ten times faster than it used to be. It’s an order of magnitude improvement.”

In addition, the new storage arrays take up roughly half the rack space used by the previous IBM solution — a factor that is helping to reduce costs at the external data centre.

## “Amazing” Support

Spina believes Nimble’s support for the QSL solution has been exceptional. “In early January, one of our disks failed at 8.30 on a Saturday night. I know this because I received a call from Nimble’s US support team advising me of the fact and letting me know they had already organised a replacement drive. It was a wet night and I was at home watching TV at the time. By 11.30 pm, just three hours later, a chap arrived at the door with the replacement drive. I was amazed.”

To keep in touch with QSL’s storage demands, performance and trends, Spina periodically logs into Nimble’s InfoSight user portal. He describes the site as having “probably the simplest interface I’ve ever seen. It gives enough information for people at my level to know what is going on with the storage.”

“Dealing with Nimble has been a really great experience all around. All the people we’ve dealt with are really positive. It’s amazing when someone really believes in the organisation they work for. It makes it all the more enjoyable,” he concludes.



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