Designvox, a human-centered strategy, design and technology firm, gets creative with Egnyte for Google Apps to solve increasing demand for storage, connectivity and collaboration.
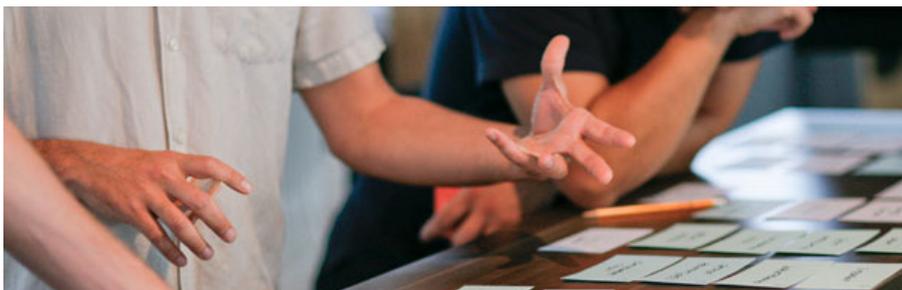
designvox

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Petrit Rudi
Director of Technology

Creativity through Diversity

Founded in 1994, Designvox is a human-centered culture-change consultancy for companies of all types and sizes around the world. Headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the 25 person team prides themselves on providing strategy, design and technology solutions. They are open minded craftspeople from many walks of life, bringing diverse perspectives and experience without assumptions or bias. Designvox enables companies such as Whirlpool, Newell Rubbermaid, Eli Lilly, Cummins, Faurecia, Steelcase, izzy+, HopeWaterProject and many others to imagine, create, and experience a better tomorrow, today.

At a Glance

Michigan-based human-centered strategy, design and technology firm, Designvox, was challenged by increasing server complexity and failures causing low productivity during downtime. Adopting the Egnyte for Google Apps solution gave Designvox a centralized management and access for all files that was easy to edit and share files faster and in a more secure way. It enabled their team to store, share and access any file from anywhere, with any device. As a result teams could collaborate more efficiently, granting employees more time to focus on providing superb experiences to their clients.

No time for Downtime

In the 7 years prior to moving to Google and Egnyte, Designvox operated from a 22 Terabyte (TB) central file server located in its office, with 16TB for storage and 6TB of parity backup storage. The company constantly battled server problems, effectively stopping work while the server was restarted, or worse, restored from the parity backup. With multiple disciplines including Strategy, Technology, Design, and Project Management all needing access to the server to collaborate, these problems meant countless hours of downtime and slowed productivity. This just describes the situation when everyone was in the office; this didn't include when employees were off-site at client meetings or forced to work from home during those "pleasant" Michigan snow days. They often encountered problems connecting to their Virtual Private Network (VPN), spending more downtime trying to troubleshoot the issue.

Designvox's server issues stemmed from its exponentially increasing demand for storage space, reliable data handling, and collaborative tools. The types of problems their client organizations faced were becoming more complex, demanding greater research, new forms of collaboration, and integrated multidisciplinary solutions. This increased demand put greater and greater strain on their systems. The firm had to continuously re-architect its file servers to match that demand which led to an increasingly complex storage environment and additional maintenance every time a problem arose. A large amount of time was spent weekly on server maintenance and planning for future upgrades or hardware changes. Eventually it became clear that continuing to invest in a large, complex, and high maintenance file server environment wasn't an efficient strategy, and Designvox needed to eliminate the burden of having to maintain unreliable, continuously outmoded hardware without an excessive investment into dedicated IT personnel.

Egnyte for Google Apps

Designvox began to look at solutions built to facilitate content collaboration at their core, not just as a storage solution. After extensively looking into about a dozen solutions such as Rackspace, Amazon S3, Box, Alfresco, and SharePoint, Designvox realized that, although those companies offered cloud storage services, the cost savings and flexibility by going with Google Drive for Work combined with the file sharing capability of Egnyte was extremely sizeable. One of the major positives was Google offers unlimited storage for its Drive for Work accounts. Pairing Drive's unlimited cloud

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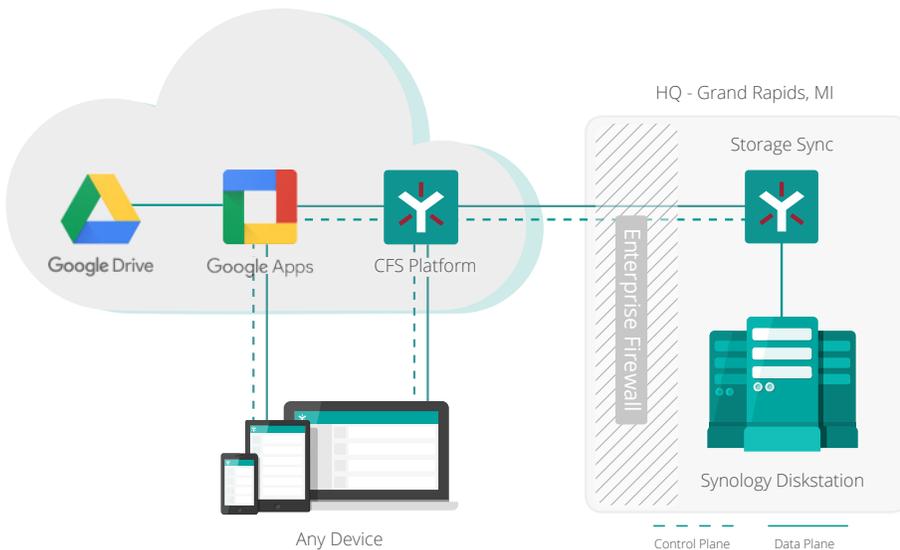
Petrit Rudi
Director of Technology

storage with on-premises Egnyte Storage Sync for Synology, was the low maintenance, easy to use, and low cost solution Designvox had been looking for. Storage Sync bi-directionally syncs data on premises with the cloud, allowing Designvox's files on the on-premises storage to be synced in the cloud with Drive, enabling users to store, share and access from anywhere, with any device.

Egnyte for Google Apps extends Google Drive for Work into a hybrid corporate file server that converges cloud and on-premises file shares across the entire organization and centralizes admin controls for all collaboration with those files. By coupling both solutions, Designvox was able to complement its Google Drive investment by providing a single pane of glass to view, manage and access all their files regardless of where they are physically stored. Another key feature the Designvox team loved was Google's Single Sign-On (SSO) service for Drive accounts. This allowed users to access all of their Google Apps including Egnyte for Google Apps after signing into an SSO sign-in page just once. Users can access Google docs, sheets, etc. directly from the Egnyte UI or share them seamlessly via Egnyte from their Google Apps environment.

> Since implementing Egnyte for Google Apps, we haven't had a day where work came to a complete standstill, which was often the case with our previous environment.

Jeff Dickinson
Systems Administrator, Designvox

HQ - Grand Rapids, MI

Storage Sync

Google Drive

Google Apps

CFS Platform

Enterprise Firewall

Synology Diskstation

Any Device

Control Plane   Data Plane

Breakthrough Success Requires Imaginative Leaps

Designvox is a highly collaborative environment with anywhere from 45-60 projects going on at one point in time. Adopting the combined Google and Egnyte solution was beneficial for multiple reasons. Google offered unlimited storage which allowed Designvox to quickly start pushing all of its data, especially the archived data from its back-up storage to Google Drive.

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This eliminated the need for its existing back-up storage devices which saved Designvox $5,000 - 10,000 in CAPEX a year, as well as over $200 a month on electricity bills. Another benefit is Google's easy-to-use suite of tools such as docs, sheets, and slides as evidenced by their creation of over 48,000 documents since the adoption of Google Drive three years ago. Designvox is now easily creating proposals, estimates, spec sheets, journey maps, strategic plans, presentations, research matrices, innovation briefs, service blueprints, project timelines, information architectures, research and interview documentation, content strategies, buy-cycles, points of view documents, tactical plans, marketing strategies, and more in Google Docs that can be shared and edited by the entire team via Egnyte Enterprise File Services. All of Designvox's market research was put into Google Sheets that can be quickly filtered depending on the client's industry for faster insight into trends, successes, and failures. "This isn't something we do on the side, Egnyte for Google Apps has become the way we work, from start to finish. It increases our efficiency which in turn makes us that much more valuable to our clients," said Petrit Rudi, Director of Technology at Designvox.

Besides those 48,000 documents, Designvox was also able to sync and share all its additional files via Egnyte such as PDF's, Photos, Movies, and Adobe Creative Suite Projects. By having all files, even large files that would otherwise be prone to latency, easily accessible on-premises or in the cloud regardless of location, Designvox's productivity increased dramatically. "Having the ability to access files in a non-confined way, it just works. That has tremendously changed the whole flow of things at Designvox. Whether we need to access a file at an offsite client meeting via phone, tablet, or computer or stuck at our houses in a snowstorm, it just works," says Rudi. The Designvox team is no longer impeded by server crashes or extended downtime which allows and empowers employees to focus on helping their clients succeed.

> We really wanted a solution that got us away from relying on our own hardware, relying on hardware that we had to maintain and upgrade every time we ran out of space. We wanted to get away from continuing to purchase servers we knew would eventually fail. The Egnyte for Google Apps integration was exactly what we were looking for. It made us more productive and efficient, without being complex and difficult to manage.

Jeff Dickinson
Systems Administrator, Designvox

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