



## NetApp® Filers Help Willis Group Consolidate Storage, Simplify Administration

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RICHARD TALBOT,  
Implementation Manager,  
Willis Group Ltd.

### Willis Group Ltd. Key Highlights

#### INDUSTRY

- Risk management and insurance brokerage

#### LOCATION

- Ipswich and London, UK

#### KEY BUSINESS CHALLENGES

- Consolidate and centralize storage
- Support thin client strategy

#### SOLUTION

- NetApp F760 filers
- SnapRestore®, SnapMirror®, SnapManager® software
- NetApp Services

#### KEY BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Simplified administration
- Enhanced disaster recovery
- Low TCO

### Willis Group Ltd.

Willis Group Ltd. is a leading global insurance broker, developing and delivering professional insurance, reinsurance, risk management, financial and human resource consulting, and actuarial services to corporations, public entities, and institutions around the world. With over 300 offices in more than 100 countries, its global team of 13,000 associates serves over 50,000 clients in 160 countries. Willis has particular expertise in serving the needs of clients in such major industries as construction, aerospace, marine, and energy. Annual revenues are in excess of \$1.4 billion and the group is publicly traded on the NYSE.

### The Challenge: Consolidating Storage and Supporting Remote Offices

With teams of employees operating from locations around the UK and the Republic of Ireland, Willis wanted to consolidate IT functions at central operating centers in Ipswich and London. From those centers, it planned to manage its desktop environment remotely, providing desktop services via thin client technology to teams in field offices. To accomplish this, the company would use Microsoft® Windows® 2000 Terminal Services and Citrix Metaframe. This IT restructuring would require a corresponding consolidation of data storage resources. The challenge was to replace the 38 servers distributed around the company’s network with a centralized storage solution.

“Our total cost of ownership for the storage infrastructure was too great,” says Eoghan Doyle, UK technical services director, Willis Group Ltd. “For example, every year we had to upgrade every server. Our goal was to reduce the overhead involved in managing and maintaining the whole network, so the idea of implementing a single major storage infrastructure that could be easily mirrored for data recovery was very attractive.”

### The Solution: Clustered NetApp Filers at Central Locations

Willis set up a comprehensive evaluation process for prospective storage solutions, comparing them on the basis of speed of file serving, simplicity of management, scalability, rapid backup, and ongoing total cost of ownership (TCO). During the evaluation process, Willis conducted pilot tests in a simulated real-life environment. Network Appliance supplied a filer so the IT staff could familiarize themselves with the technology and evaluate a unit in the actual Willis environment.

At the end of the process, Willis selected Network Appliance™ filers to consolidate data storage and support its thin client strategy. Compared with its closest competitor, the NetApp solution better met Willis’s criteria, offered a more effective disaster recovery process, and showed a dramatic saving of over £3 million (over US\$4.5 million) in projected total cost of ownership. “It was particularly attractive that the NetApp filers would be manageable in-house and provide a high level of resilience without an enormous footprint or cost,” says Richard Talbot, implementation manager, Willis Group Ltd.

### CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Network Appliance storage solutions offer customers seamless data management, simplified backup and recovery, and effortless remote office access to data at the lowest total cost of ownership.

The company has now deployed two NetApp filers in a Clustered Failover configuration at its Ipswich location and two more at its London offices. The filers support the company's 4,000 users with 3TB of storage. For enhanced data security, NetApp SnapMirror software mirrors the contents of one filer to the other at the Ipswich location.

According to Talbot, the installation process was quick and simple. Talbot, who oversaw the project, says he was impressed with the ease with which the filers were installed. "The engineer who came to install the filers showed one of our engineers how to do it," he says. "The filers were extremely simple to set up."

#### **Business Benefits: Faster Restores, Simple Administration**

The company is using SnapRestore and SnapMirror to enhance data availability and security. "These tools are exceptionally valuable to our operations," says Talbot. "A Snapshot™ is taken every hour between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., together with the daily and weekly Snapshots. This has made a huge difference in the time it takes to restore data. Previously it could take up to 72 hours before lost data was restored, but now we can restore data from within the last month almost immediately."

After the sale, NetApp Services delivered training that enables the Willis Information Services Division technical staff to manage and maintain the filers. Andy Atkins, a Willis Group technical specialist who attended the training courses, says, "I found them extremely

useful and very comprehensive. We went from basic administration through to advanced courses and instruction on clustering and SnapManager. NetApp was very good at responding to our comments and tailoring the training to meet our needs and level of experience."

Richard Talbot admits to being thoroughly impressed by Network Appliance. "Not only are their products first class, the support we've had from NetApp has been superb," he says.

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