



Media & Entertainment

MSG Networks Achieves MVP Performance Thanks to the Versatility and Flexibility of Qumulo's Modern Scale-Out Storage

MSG Networks, Inc. broadcaster of eight major New York-area sports teams had outgrown the storage for its digitized TV and Internet content. Frustrated with slow performance and lack of easy scalability, MSG turned to Qumulo's modern scale-out storage for better data visibility, easier integration and a cost-effective system that could grow as needed.

Game Over for Old Storage Solution

MSG Networks, Inc. is a top regional sports network with live sports and entertainment programming and is an industry leader with two award-winning sports and entertainment networks, MSG Network (MSG) and MSG+; in addition to the live streaming and video on demand platform MSGGO. The networks are home to eight professional sports teams: the New York Knicks; New York Rangers; New York Liberty; New York Islanders; New Jersey Devils; Buffalo Sabres; Major League Soccer's Red Bulls and the Westchester Knicks, as well as college football and college basketball from top conferences, and a full schedule of critically-acclaimed original programming. The content is distributed across two television channels, MSG and MSG+, as well as MSGGO and individual team sites.

As you can imagine, MSG Networks' graphics-laden digitized media devours storage capacity, and the large file sizes strain system performance every time the content is uploaded, transferred or edited in post-production. For years the organization relied on an Isilon array for nearline storage of the production video playback and ingest systems. Unfortunately, while battle-hardened, the Isilon system's performance was not easily scalable, and it wasn't configured for live-video playback, something MSG Networks was actively planning to implement.

"We have a small engineering group to cover all of MSG's abundant infrastructure and systems, which means we're multitasking at all times," says Raoul Edwards, Director, Network Systems Engineering and Field Ops. It was important that MSG had a data storage system that could not only keep up, but also keep data management simple.

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— **Raoul Edwards,**
Director, Network Systems
Engineering and Field Ops,
MSG Networks

"We needed the storage equivalent of a reliable Swiss army knife, and unfortunately our old system just wasn't cutting it anymore," he says.

The need for a modern scale-out storage solution was underscored in the summer of 2015 after MSG's engineering team implemented new state of the art video editing, high-speed transfer and media asset management systems that were changing workflows across the company.



Solution Overview

- 5 QC208 Hybrid Storage Appliances
- NFS and SMB protocols
- Qumulo Care enterprise support

Key Benefits for MSG Networks

- Increases performance for high-speed access and transfer of large media files
- Integrates easily with other systems to facilitate smooth workflow
- Cost-effectively scales to meet future capacity and performance requirements without breaking the budget
- Provides a reliable central storage repository for a broad range of business groups
- Reduces or eliminates administrative overhead so small engineering teams can focus on other responsibilities

"As we grew our infrastructure into 10GbE and now as we look at the 40GbE space, it was impossibly limiting to only have an SMB1 connection to our existing storage array. That caused a bottleneck for everything else at our facility," Edwards explains.

The legacy Isilon NAS was quickly demoted to basic, ancillary storage, and MSG was left scrambling to find a new modern solution for its production systems.

Fast, Flexible and Affordable Storage

As the organization began its search, three parameters came to the forefront for its next storage selection. It had to easily scale across both capacity and performance, it needed a flexible and reliable design that could readily integrate into current and future workflows, and it had to offer the cost-effectiveness to fit within a tight budget.

"We looked at all of the 'unknowns' we frequently encounter on the job, and how we can better support unexpected demands on our data," says Edwards. "Our old system was versatile enough to service those multiple workflows and data processes; we just needed to replicate that with a more modern scale-out storage design."

MSG Networks worked with media & entertainment solutions provider CineSys-Oceana to vet multiple options, including taking a serious look at new Isilon systems. One thing became clear in that search: many of these scale-out NAS solutions were actually designed around a closed architecture. That limited future scalability and flexibility, as well as driving up cost threatened to put MSG Networks right back where it was in short order.

"We need to be very strategic with purchases and equipment selections because we're not going to be able to replace it again in two years," explains Edwards. "So when we were looking at scale-out storage options, we knew we needed to get as close to a 'future-proof' solution as possible."

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It was in this context that Qumulo emerged as the leading contender to fill the company's storage needs. Qumulo offers a modern approach to scale-out storage, delivering fast, flexible and highly scalable storage together with the real-time analytics necessary for visibility into data usage and performance at petabyte scale. MSG Networks purchased five of Qumulo's QC208 hybrid storage appliances, and as the team deployed the new solution, the process quickly confirmed that Qumulo was the right choice.

"We don't have a lot of downtime to make engineering changes between seasons, and we've often got thirty to forty projects queued up for that period. Qumulo's pre-sales team was able to help us prepare up front and work through any potential obstacles, such that the actual install itself was a breeze – something that happens way less frequently than we'd like it to," he notes.

A Slam-Dunk Victory for MSG Networks

Timed to launch with the start of the 2015 hockey and basketball seasons, the Qumulo cluster hit the ground running, acting as a central data storage repository working in conjunction with all of MSG Networks' new post-production and media asset management software.

"We've changed the way we deliver files out of house and internally to other systems, and Qumulo's easy integration into our workflow and systems is playing a part in that," notes Edwards. "Everyone from the marketing group to our dot-com and interactive groups are relying on it. Whether the files are being sent to cable operators, the MSG on-air promotions department, or our teams' websites, the deliverables are all passing through Qumulo."

Going forward, MSG Networks expects to continue expanding the scope of business units and functions that are interacting with the Qumulo cluster, including opening it up to mobile video field units for home and away games, and eventually processing and delivery for live video.

The MSG Networks team is also looking forward to digging into one of Qumulo's defining features: its real-time analytic design. Qumulo delivers real-time data analytics that help businesses obtain instant answers and insight about their data footprint, explaining usage patterns and showing workload impact on performance and capacity. Organizations like MSG Networks can tap these analytics through a convenient dashboard available in any browser, and use the REST-API for easy report customization or even integration into other data systems.

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As MSG Networks adapts and changes how it uses the new storage cluster, they plan to rely heavily on the Qumulo Care customer success team for support. "I really like the bi-weekly calls I get from Qumulo Care. That level of proactivity just isn't something we see from any other vendors, and it really helps us stay connected and ensure there aren't any issues with the storage."

"In fact," says Edwards, "The entire Qumulo experience so far has been thoroughly refreshing." High praise indeed from someone whose winning game plan has set up MSG and its data for many seasons of future growth.

