



DataCore Powers Consolidated Communications' Mission-Critical Storage Infrastructure for More Than a Decade



DataCore Software-Defined Storage Becomes Top Choice for Company's Engineering Organization

Consolidated Communications Holdings, Inc., (Nasdaq: CNSL) is among the top 10 largest fiber providers in the U.S. As a leading broadband and business communications provider, the company serves consumers, businesses, and wireless and wireline carriers across rural and metro communities throughout a 23-state service area. Its advanced network spans 37,000 fiber route miles, delivering a wide range of communications solutions including high-speed Internet, data, phone services, security, managed services, cloud services and wholesale carrier solutions.

From its first connection 125 years ago, Consolidated Communications has been dedicated to turning technology into solutions, connecting people and enriching how they work and live. With more than 1.8 million connections, it has the scale and the network to provide reliable solutions for consumers, businesses of all sizes and carriers.

A high-availability, always-on infrastructure is a critical part of fulfilling this mission. Consolidated Communications works with premiere technology services provider Mirazon as its data storage solutions advisor. Through its collaboration with Mirazon, Consolidated Communications has been using DataCore software-defined storage for more than 10 years to power its infrastructure across the U.S. with incredible results.

THE CHALLENGE

An email outage to all residential email customers was the catalyst that drove Consolidated Communications to look for a new data storage solution that would deliver the flexibility, features and performance it needed. Prior to turning to DataCore, the company had installed a SAN solution that couldn't keep pace with the company's caching requirements, and within a few short months not only proved to be inadequate, but, ultimately, failed.

THE SOLUTION

DataCore initially was deployed at three Consolidated locations in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Texas. DataCore provided the rich feature set the engineering team required at a much more competitive price than other solutions. As the company has grown, it continues to deploy DataCore throughout its infrastructure.

“After witnessing the many benefits of DataCore, it was a no-brainer to continue to add software-defined storage to all new locations,” said Jeff Fuesting, systems engineer at Consolidated Communications. “DataCore became our platform of choice as we expanded to additional locations. It was the perfect fit to power our entire storage infrastructure.”

The software-defined storage technology allows Consolidated Communications to control and design its own hardware storage appliances—creating ultimate flexibility. Consolidated uses DataCore software-defined storage in two ways: as a traditional SAN product that uses bare metal servers with hard drives and SSDs, and in a hyper-converged model as virtualized storage controllers providing scale-out storage.

“With DataCore, we have an immense range of flexibility that enables us to implement the same product in many different ways; we can simply layer DataCore on top of our own storage designs and be confident that it will work seamlessly,” continued Fuesting. “I’m not aware of any other storage product that can do that.”

DataCore software-defined storage now has displaced every other storage product within Consolidated Communications’ engineering group, achieving 100% uptime for more than 10 years. Today, the group manages 17 DataCore implementations and has plans for future deployments.

THE RESULTS

One of the pivotal reasons Consolidated Communications chose DataCore was its synchronous mirroring capability. This enables Consolidated to implement a stretched high-availability configuration across two separate geographical regions—essentially creating two, separate but equal parts of the SAN. For example, if a component fails or if there is damage to a fiber path, a power outage, or other network disruption in one location, the second location continues to operate unaffected.

This high-availability solution is specifically designed to prevent equipment and site outages from interrupting access to critical information. The goal is to deliver “zero downtime, zero touch” failover to maximize business continuity.

DataCore software-defined storage accomplishes this by constantly mirroring data at high speeds between the geographically separate locations. It keeps active-active copies synchronized even when using different types of storage devices at each end. Local and stretched/metro clusters perceive the independent, mirrored copies as a single set of data, simultaneously reachable from either location over redundant paths.

When problems prevent applications from reaching the data at one location, failover to the mirrored copy occurs instantaneously and automatically without disruption, scripting or manual intervention. Similarly, the built-in automation takes care of resynchronization and fallback to normal operations after the original cause of the outage is resolved.

The Benefits:

100% Uptime

Since the time DataCore was installed more than 10 years ago, largely due to synchronous mirroring technology.

Reduction in Storage-Related Spending

DataCore helps keep storage costs down by enabling Consolidated Communications to design the storage exactly how they want it; by reducing the amount of hardware it needs to achieve performance results, and by extending the life of existing storage hardware.

Management Simplicity

DataCore provides a single pane of glass for Consolidated Communications' engineering group to manage its entire storage portfolio.

Worry-Free Maintenance:

"We are so comfortable with DataCore's technology that it allows us to perform basic maintenance operations all the way up to forklift upgrades at any time," observed Fuesting. "We would not be comfortable doing that with any other storage solution. That is a huge advantage with a limited workforce."

A Single Solution:

For Consolidated Communications, keeping its workforce educated about only one product continues to be an efficient and effective way to manage its data storage requirements. Any member of the systems engineering team can perform upgrades and maintenance, avoiding the need for specialists to manage diverse storage systems.

“Every time we review the data storage offers of other well-known vendors, I'm not convinced their products can outperform the capabilities we have with DataCore.”

- Jeff Fuesting, Consolidated Communications Holdings

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About Mirazon:

Mirazon is a Louisville-based IT solutions provider with deep experience in the storage and virtualization space. Mirazon has been a DataCore partner for over 15 years and has executed hundreds of successful deployments, not to mention the SAN and virtualization work that often goes hand-in-hand with them. Because the team at Mirazon does have years of experience and training around not only DataCore but storage area networks overall, their connectivity, virtualization platforms and the other infrastructure parts, they can create appropriate custom solutions for clients that suit their needs and their budgets. www.mirazon.com

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