# NetApp FlexPod Enables Global Storage Unity for ICON

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## Customer Profile

ICON plc is a global provider of outsourced development services to the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device industries. The company specialises in the strategic development, management and analysis of programs that support clinical development - from compound selection to Phase I-IV clinical studies. ICON currently has approximately 11,000 employees, operating in 38 countries.

Uniquely the company's services can be adapted to suit small local groups or large global programmes. In an industry that is characterised by fragmentation it is one of only a small number of organisations that has the capability and expertise to conduct clinical trials and development projects on either a local or a global basis.

The company has a bespoke technology platform called ICONIK designed to deliver clinical studies faster than average and more cost effectively. The platform underpins many of the company's operations and provides a single holistic view of all study information. The platform can analyse a blend of operational, quality, and clinical safety data across multiple studies and different therapeutic areas to provide complete transparency throughout the entire drug development lifecycle.

## The Challenge

The nature of ICON's work by definition generates enormous quantities of data. Clinical trials can take years from inception to product and all data needs to be gathered, analysed, and stored. Ten years ago the company stored approximately 200 terabytes of data. Today it is closer to 6 petabytes.

The company started up in Ireland in 1990 and since then has grown organically to 78 sites globally. This gradual expansion meant its storage platform developed according to local needs. However as the company grew it was becoming increasingly difficult to share files, for example across different territories and it wasn't unusual for IT teams in different locations to experience outages.

Shawn Foran, senior manager of Core IT Operations, ICON, says, "We have multiple data centres and, with an introduction of a greenfield data centre site in the U.S., it was a good opportunity to look at the best way to consolidate our storage environment, reduce our footprint, cut operational costs, and simplify management."

> "There are a lot of benefits with NetApp when we compared it to other technologies. These include reduced operational and capital costs, efficiency, easier management, scalability, and simplified support processes."

**Shawn Foran**
Senior Manager, Core IT Operations, ICON

## The Solution

With the U.S. greenfield site in mind, the company began exploring a number of storage vendors' technologies. Within a short time ICON decided to move to a NetApp FlexPod environment. The rationale was straightforward: "We already had an extensive NetApp estate which had developed over the years. It is a reliable and cost-effective storage environment and the teams were familiar with tools like NetApp SnapManager and SnapMirror.

"There were a lot of benefits with NetApp when we compared it to other technologies. These include reduced operational and capital costs, efficiency, easier management, scalability, and simplified support processes. Within this context using FlexPod was a natural underpinning for us," states Foran.

FlexPod is an integrated computing, networking, and storage solution with configurations and workloads published as validated designs. Its components include NetApp unified storage systems and the Cisco® Unified Computing System™. The Island Networks, ICON's preferred NetApp partner and FlexPod specialist, assisted with the design and implementation of each of the FlexPod platforms in ICON. Island Networks also was central in both the migration of the existing 7-Mode estate to the clustered Data ONTAP® operating system and in the global implementation of Citrix XenApp and XenDesktop. This change provided ICON with a simple, scalable solution to support its accelerated business growth as well as meet its consolidation objectives.

## Business Benefits

### IT as a service for internal customers

By utilising the converged FlexPod infrastructure, operational pressure on ICON's IT teams has been greatly reduced, allowing the company to align its IT infrastructure with the business and ultimately provide IT as a service to internal customers.

### Scalability underpins business growth

One of the key business pillars for ICON has been scalability. By moving to a FlexPod infrastructure and leveraging clustered Data ONTAP, ICON can scale out in an effective manner to meet growing business needs without the need for "forklift" upgrades.

### No interruptions for end users

Implementing clustered Data ONTAP has allowed ICON to grow its storage capacity with no interruptions to the end user. Foran says, "Pooling resources among clustered Data ONTAP heads means better use of our disks. It not only reduced our physical storage footprint by approximately 25% but it means we can deliver a more reliable service for end users."

### Rapid provisioning of new services

ICON is now able to rapidly provision new servers. "Our average server build time has been reduced by nearly 75%, from four hours to one hour. Additionally, due to ongoing initiatives to leverage FlexPod in other areas, we also reclaimed almost 62U of rack space," adds Foran.

### Flexible virtualisation delivers savings

The implementation of NetApp FAS8040 FlexArray™ software allowed ICON to virtualise an existing vendor's storage array and leverage unused storage capacity, saving approximately $100,000.

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## Capital and operational costs plunge

The availability of FlexPod Validated Designs has enabled the company to substantially reduce its procurement and planning time to deploy a Citrix XenApp/XenDesktop solution for 11,000 users globally. Says Foran, "The FlexPod architecture has substantially reduced the capital and operational costs associated with a globally dispersed desktop infrastructure."

## About Island Networks

Island Networks is a privately owned IT Services company, providing cloud and converged infrastructure solutions to enterprises and government departments, working in partnership with the leading global manufacturers of hardware and software products. These solutions comprise products from NetApp, Cisco, VMware, Microsoft and Citrix together with a comprehensive suite of professional services from Island Networks, including training, implementation and support services.

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### SOLUTION COMPONENTS

**NetApp Products**

- FlexPod architecture, including clustered Data ONTAP®
- NetApp FAS6240, NetApp FAS3250, and NetApp FAS8040 V-Series
- NFS/CIFS/Fibre Channel/iSCSI
- Full NetApp SnapManager® Suite
- VMware®, Oracle®, Exchange, and SQL Server®
- Citrix XenApp/XenDesktop

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