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case study

## Breakthrough:

Noridian Mutual Insurance Company Optimizes Storage Assets to Improve Business Security and Agility.

## Imagine It

Respond to storage growth driven by new business initiatives and government-mandated programs.

## Done

With the help of architectural assessment, roadmap and design services from Unisys, Noridian Mutual Insurance Company deployed an enterprise storage area network (SAN) using EMC technology to integrate a legacy mainframe environment, open server environment and storage assets.

## Results: Secure, Optimized IT Infrastructure

Noridian used Unisys technical consulting services to gain visibility into its information lifecycle requirements and effectively consolidate storage resources.

## Metrics

- Flexibility: Allocate storage resources where needed
- Manageability: Reduce management overhead through storage consolidation
- Business protection: Full disaster recovery capabilities for open server and mainframe environments
- Longevity: 50 to 60 percent annual storage growth rate and support for new application deployments

## Business Challenge: Manage Information More Effectively

Fargo, North Dakota-based Noridian Mutual Insurance Company began operations in the 1940s, offering the state's first prepaid hospital and medical health coverage plans. Today, Noridian is a multi-faceted corporation, providing private health coverage, life insurance, administrative services, third-party administration and many other products and services.

Committed to high quality and service while keeping administrative costs low, Noridian realized that growth from expanding business and new government mandates would soon impact operational effectiveness. These mandates include Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations designed to improve the electronic interchange of healthcare transactions. As a result, Noridian's storage needs were growing between 50 and 60 percent annually.

The company's existing IT infrastructure faced several limitations. The EMC Symmetrix 5700 disk subsystem that supported Noridian's main corporate/production data center had reached maximum capacity. In addition, the company's open server environment, composed of individual servers with their own channel-attached disk storage, resulted in underutilized storage resources and costly administration and management. The lack of available EMC disk also made it difficult to deploy mission-critical applications. For example, Noridian wanted to consolidate multiple EDI applications used for Medicare claims processing into a single application. The solution needed a huge amount of storage — prompting the insurer to turn to its longtime technology partner, Unisys, for help.

## Solution: Consolidate and Simplify Using an Enterprise Storage Area Network Solution

Cost management and potential storage growth thus became key concerns. To obtain an unbiased view of its storage capabilities, Noridian engaged Unisys Technical Consulting Services (TCS) to perform an Enterprise Storage Roadmap. Through this service, TCS experts assessed all storage

assets in the company's open server and mainframe environments at both its main data center (CSOC) and development/ disaster recovery (VSOP) data center locations. This included a "class of service" analysis to determine which server and storage components were mission-critical, as well as a complete review of application, networking and business continuance requirements.

Subsequently, Unisys TCS recommended that Noridian deploy an enterprise storage area network (SAN) solution to obtain desired levels of flexibility, scalability and manageability. A formal bid process followed, with Unisys the clear winner — the only vendor with a cost-effective, proven multi-platform solution.

"Unisys helped us assess our storage requirements and build a flexible, robust storage area network that also incorporated disaster recovery," explains Danny Mastre, manager, Technical Support.

Initially, the enterprise SAN solution included two EMC Symmetrix 8830 disk arrays — one located at the CSOC and the other at the VSOP. Jointly, they provide up to 90 terabytes of storage capacity. Other components deployed at each data center included EMC Connectrix switches, which link 20 open servers and Unisys ClearPath and IBM mainframes to the SAN, EMC SDRF and TimeFinder software for backup and disaster recovery; and StorageTek tape products for additional backup support.

This enterprise SAN infrastructure lets all host systems communicate with each other across the storage area network and permits sharing of storage assets, including tape libraries between the CSOC and VSOP data centers. Thanks to the Unisys, EMC and StorageTek partnership, the SAN implementation ran smoothly.

Recently, EMC CLARiiON storage has been added to the SAN to strengthen the company's information lifecycle management (ILM) position by providing Tier 2 storage for archival and less mission-critical applications. This move helps Noridian respond to new government regulations that mandate storage of certain information for longer periods of time. Thanks to the SAN architecture Unisys created, the environment is easily able to respond to new requirements.

## Results: Improved Flexibility, Better Business Protection, A Foundation for Growth

Since the enterprise SAN was first deployed in 2002, Noridian has continued to benefit from this well-designed and reliable solution. Key benefits include:

- Improved flexibility to allocate storage resources where needed
- Lower management overhead via storage consolidation
- Enhanced business protection with full disaster recovery capabilities for open server and mainframe environments
- Improved foundation for growth to meet 50 to 60 percent annual storage growth rate and support new application deployments

## Profile: Noridian Mutual Insurance Company

- Headquartered in Fargo, North Dakota
- Founded in the 1940's, 2,000 employees, 25 offices across the western United States
- Private health coverage, life insurance, administrative services, third-party administration and many other products and services, such as:
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota and outsourced processing for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wyoming
- Noridian Administrative Services, a regional claims contractor for the federal government's Medicare program, processing claims for the states of North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming, Colorado, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona and Hawaii

## Solution At a Glance

- Architectural Assessment and Design Service – Enterprise Storage Roadmap
- Enterprise SAN Implementation
- EMC Symmetrix and CLARiiON Disk Storage Arrays
- EMC Connectrix Switches
- EMC SRDF and TimeFinder Software
- StorageTek Tape Products

“The SAN solution helps us meet service level agreements because we’re able to add new servers very quickly,” Mastre explains. “We plug them into the SAN and disk is available to them immediately. And, if we need more storage, we can just throw more disk into the EMC cabinet and it is available to any server on the storage area network.”

The solution greatly improved manageability and flexibility. For example, in the former server-dependent disk storage environment, managing disk resources was time-consuming and complex — and adding storage capacity meant costly upgrades. Today, the SAN gives IT managers a single view of enterprise storage and the ability to quickly meet changing demands.

With fewer resources to manage, Noridian also has slashed backup and recovery times, completing in hours what used to take an entire day.

Finally, the enterprise SAN greatly improved Noridian’s business continuity position. Mastre explains, “Now that we’re mirroring our data over our storage area network, we’re able to recover our systems almost immediately.”

## The Relationship: Perfect Combination of Business and Technology Know-How

There’s a real sense of partnership at work between Noridian and Unisys. “Unisys has been with Noridian for a long time and has a great deal of knowledge of our business,” says Darrell Vanyo, Noridian’s vice president and chief information officer. “And, the Unisys partnership with EMC has been good for us because they’re able to address our needs with EMC. It’s been a good partnership all the way around.”

Danny Mastre adds, “Unisys and EMC working together with Noridian built this infrastructure that has been working great and will continue to do so in the future.”

