North State Grocery Moves It All to Quest's Cloud

"These days, maintaining information technology infrastructure can get a little tough on the budget," says Steve Kasper, Director of MIS at North State Grocery, Inc.

Founded in 1962, North State Grocery operates a chain of 19 Holiday Market stores in northern California that see stiff competition from both boutique markets and national chains in an industry notorious for tight margins.

"We faced additional data center dollars for this cycle," Steve explains, "so we decided to better leverage that spend by moving our entire infrastructure to the cloud."

Finding the right cloud service...

North State's search for the right cloud provider included the usual high-profile offerings.

"We considered Amazon, Azure, and the like, but they offer no client services," says Steve. "After you sign up, you're on your own — no dedicated account manager. When you have an issue, you call 1-800-Help Me, and who knows who you'll get on the other end or how much time you'll need to educate that person about what you're doing."

This sort of cloud model wouldn't work for North State, Steve concluded. "We were looking for more than a transaction. We wanted a technology partner."

Even more surprising, and contrary to widely held belief, the larger-vendor offerings were more expensive. "Trust me," Steve reports. "They're not cheaper at all."

...And the right technology partner

Steve checked out Quest after consulting several colleagues in the grocery business. "Quest was the name that kept coming up."

"I called some of the references Quest gave me, of course," he recalls. "I also contacted grocers not on the list but that I knew used Quest. They all were very happy with the Quest relationship and kept re-upping. Well, my feeling is if you keep going back to a technology provider it's because they're doing right by you."
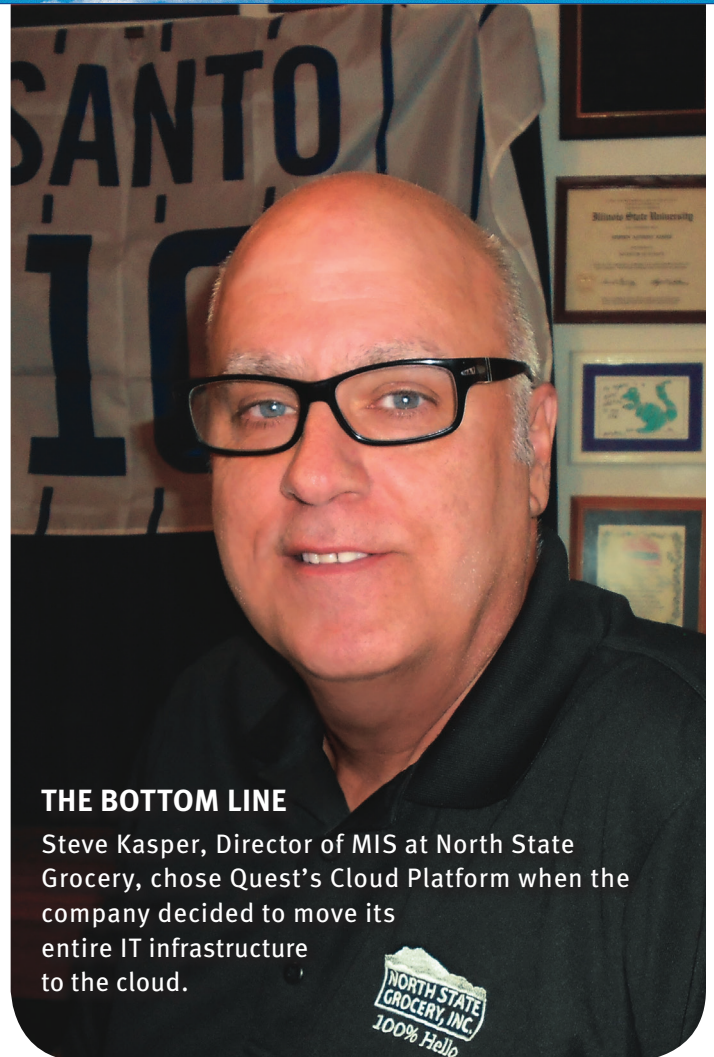
THE BOTTOM LINE
Steve Kasper, Director of MIS at North State Grocery, chose Quest's Cloud Platform when the company decided to move its entire IT infrastructure to the cloud.

IN THIS ISSUE
North State Grocery chooses Quest's cloud — and Quest's services

FROM TIM BURKE...

Does Your Cloud Provider Care About You?

Offloading your IT functions to a cloud service can be an immense relief.

The day-to-day operational hassles belong to someone else. Dashboards and web portals make it much easier to track network and application performance, even if you're lounging by a pool somewhere. When you need to scale up or down, there's an app for that. The security of your data is in the hands of well-trained experts using sophisticated tools. Time for another mojito.

Sounds great — but it all depends on the cloud provider you chose.

Do you want a provider with a rigid menu of options from which you tick off a few boxes and then hope and pray as you pay the monthly bill that what you've bought actually meets your requirements?

Or would you prefer a provider able to help you assess what you really need and *then* configure a customized solution comprised of cost-competitive, leading-edge technologies and services?

Do you want a cloud provider offering the sort of 1-800-Help Me client service that has you explaining your situation from scratch every time you call?

Or do you seek a provider that assigns you a dedicated account manager who knows your name, your company, and your unique operational challenges?

If you'd like to really enjoy that mojito, take the time to find the cloud provider that cares about your needs — and your future.

CHECK OUT MORE OF TIM'S THINKING AT www.questsys.com/CEOBlog/

Hassle-free migration to Quest's cloud

According to Steve, Quest is just what North State needed — a technology partner with the right combination of resources, expertise, and service.

"Quest put together an excellent project team for us. What's more, any time we exceeded the scope of the project, our account manager, Phil Ostrowski, or our IT services manager, Chris Freitag, made sure we got the resources we needed. Throughout the engagement, everyone at Quest was very responsive, and they continue to be responsive."

Most importantly, the migration went off without a hitch.

> " **The key is to be comfortable with your technology partner.** "

"I was very pleasantly surprised — amazed, actually — at how easily we migrated from our data center to the Quest cloud," Steve says. "The highest praise is that our user community didn't know anything had happened. There was zero unplanned downtime. If Quest said we'd be down twenty minutes, we were down twenty minutes."

"We're saving money"

For Steve, moving to the cloud was a "no-brainer." Network costs have dropped, he notes. So why not buy more bandwidth and have people whose expertise is maintaining data centers?

"We're saving money," he says. "We have services we didn't have before, like intrusion detection. And now, whenever we want to invoke a new application or program, we simply call Quest and have them add a server to our farm."

Steve appreciates not having to focus on hardware as North State adds stores. As for concerns about loss of control, etc., he points out, "You still own the data. And Quest's facilities are much more secure and resilient. We can now concentrate on the solutions we provide users. After all, we're here to sell groceries, not maintain and secure networks."

The key, he says, is to be comfortable with your technology partner.

"You must look at this as a long-term relationship. Examine the costs of owning a data center versus a proposal from Quest and you'll see it makes a lot of sense to move it all to their cloud."

Quest's Cloud Capabilities:

Configuring the best solutions for your needs and budget

Choosing the right cloud provider can be a challenge even if you're already clear about what your enterprise needs.

Quest eases the burden of these challenges with an extensive portfolio of cloud capabilities deployed from our worldwide network of Service Delivery Centers:

The Quest Cloud Platform™

A hyperscale public cloud infrastructure, the Quest Cloud Platform (QCP) combines leading-edge hardware and software components to provide a data center architecture that unites computing, networking, storage, and management into an intelligent, fabric-based infrastructure able to automate deployment and management across physical and virtual resources.

And you can manage and interact with your QCP cloud 24 x 7 from any location with internet access using QCP's secure web-based portal, so you can scale your cloud and its connectivity as you require whenever you require.

The Quest Cloud Platform's highly configurable offerings include:

> › **Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)/ Platform as a Service (PaaS)**, services that enable self-service allocation and flexible allotment of compute resources so you can create cloud environments uniquely customized to your needs;

> › **Database as a Service (DBaaS)**, a fully redundant SQL infrastructure — SQL Database as a Service — with self-service provisioning; and

> › **Backup as a Service (BaaS)**, a secure, versatile cloud backup solution.

Quest's private, hybrid, and function-specific cloud solutions

We provide flexible delivery service options, ranging from shared and dedicated hosting to private and hybrid clouds, all emphasizing enhanced service levels and operational efficiencies. And our many function-specific cloud offerings span:

> › **Disaster Recovery as a Service**;
> › **Desktops as a Service**;
> › **Application Development/Test as a Service**;
> › **Data Protection/Security as a Service**; and
> › **Email/Collaboration/Conferencing as a Service**.

Quest Cloud Assessments: getting you where you need to go

Quest offers numerous assessment services, including Cloud and Security Workshops, that will help you determine your business needs and your current technology capabilities — and how to close the gap between the two.

When it comes to cloud computing, Quest's goal is simple: configure the best possible cloud solutions to match your needs and your budget.

DID-YOU-KNOW?

In a Cloud-First World, the Security Is *Better*

Recent research[1] points to what many business leaders already sense — that, as one Forrester Research analyst puts it, "We're getting very close to a cloud-first mentality in most mid-sized and large enterprises, where you have to make a strong business case for why you would deploy something on-prem when there are so many options for the cloud."

After all, public cloud providers offer IT infrastructure and applications services at much lower price points than on-premises alternatives. This is partly due to lower hardware expenses, but also because cloud providers' use of advanced virtualization, standardization, automation, self-service access, and resource monitoring cuts management costs significantly.

Public cloud providers tend to do a better job of managing availability, performance, and security, too. In fact, those using public clouds cite better security as a key benefit, a view supported by a study that reviewed 2.2 million security incidents.[2]

The trick, of course, is to choose your public cloud vendor with care — and with an eye to both the security built into its cloud infrastructure and the other, customizable security capabilities (such as patch management) the vendor can provide to keep your data and applications safe.

1 https://www.techrepublic.com/resource-library/whitepapers/the-cloud-v-data-center-decision-free-pdf/
2 http://www.securityweek.com/public-cloud-most-secure-report

What's New...

Oops. The Equifax Security Breach as a Wake-Up Call

The numbers — and the dates — of the now infamous Equifax breach are, well, ulcer-inducing:

What? Highly sensitive data of 145.5 million U.S. consumers (that's nearly every adult in the country) — including Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses, and sometimes driver's license and credit card numbers — has been exposed and stolen by hackers who remain unidentified three months after the breach was discovered.

How? A code-execution vulnerability in the widely used Apache Struts web application framework, which was discovered and provided a fix early last March, remained unpatched by Equifax until the end of July, in violation of the company's own security policy and despite an advisory (back in March) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Security scans Equifax ran a week after the vulnerability was initially publicized — and several days after hackers managed to penetrate the first of many Equifax servers — somehow failed to discover the breach.

Impacts: Eventually (between mid-March and the end of July), the hackers built more than 30 separate web shells (entry points into Equifax's systems), each on a different web address, so the exploitation could continue even if some web shells were spotted. By the time the hack was discovered, it was so deeply embedded that Equifax had to take a consumer complaint portal offline for 11 days in order to close all the backdoors the intruders set up.

As of this writing, Equifax's CEO has resigned, as have its senior security officers. Multiple investigations are underway, lawsuits abound, settlements will end up, by some estimates, in the billions of dollars, and new laws may threaten Equifax's 90% gross margins (yes, you read that correctly — 90%).

Moral of the story: *Make sure all of your software and firmware gets patched as quickly as possible* — even when it's a laborious hassle (as is patching the Apache Struts vulnerability that slammed Equifax).

And if you have even the slightest doubt about your security team's ability to do that patching or adhere to your company's security policy, call in an experienced, trustworthy security technology consultant *now*.

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QUEST PLAYBOOK
What we offer:
http://www.questsys.com/ePlaybook

QUEST ASSESSMENT SERVICES
Test drive our services, evaluate our expertise.

For a complete listing, go to: http://www.questsys.com/assessment-services.aspx

Disaster Recovery Workshop
http://www.questsys.com/disaster-recovery-services/disaster-recovery-workshop-video.aspx

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