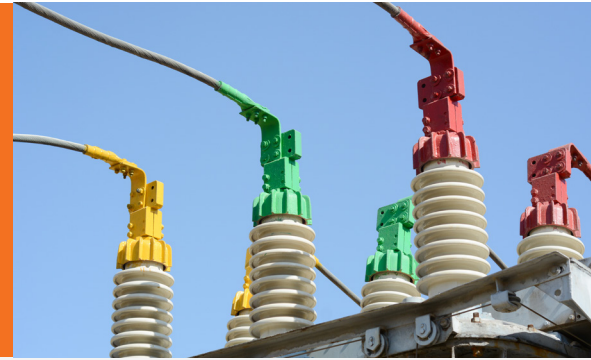# Walton Electric
## Case Study

## Nexenta Software-Defined Storage Gives Walton Electric a Burst of Energy

Monroe, Georgia
www.waltonemc.com
Government and Utilities



## Summary

**Challenge:** Tight budget, limited personnel resources, seamless integration with VMware

**Solution:** NexentaStor

**Platform:** VMware, Nexsan

**Use Case:** Server Virtualization / Hosting

**Benefits:** Lower TCO, high performance, low maintenance, simple scalability

## Business Overview

Of the 1,000 electric cooperatives across the country, Walton is one of the largest, providing electricity and natural gas to more than 122,000 residential, business and industrial customers in 10 northeast Georgia counties. Its mission is to provide reliable energy and electric services – efficiently with extraordinary customer care.

## Challenges

With six people in the IT group out of 370 employees, the company doesn't have a lot of extra time or resources to devote to storage. The number one concern is ensuring that the technology budget is used wisely. Andy Hill, Director of Information Services, comments, "What's unique about cooperatives is that we are not investor-owned, but rather customer-owned. We have a fiduciary responsibility that we use our member's money wisely. We don't have a lot of extra funds to squander on unnecessary technology architecture. We try to be responsible with the budgeted funds we have while delivering exceptional service."

To deliver on its promise of fiduciary responsibility to its members, Walton understood a Virtualization initiative in order to use its IT dollars more efficiently and to future-proof their IT infrastructure. In 2006, Walton began virtualizing its IT infrastructure with VMware. As a result, they needed an affordable and reliable storage infrastructure that worked seamlessly with VMware.

> *We were impressed with Nexenta's use of OpenSolaris. When we tested Nexenta, the performance blew us away.*
>
> Andy Hill
> Director of Information Services
> Walton Electric Membership Corporation

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## Solution

The IT team at Walton began researching and exploring options to replace its physical storage environment, which had primarily consisted of a few storage arrays tied to a server. They wanted an affordable, SAN-based storage solution that was easy to manage and offered great performance. Atlanta-based reseller Veristor Systems suggested Nexsan for the storage hardware on the back-end. Walton's own research led them to Nexenta. Hill comments, "we were impressed with Nexenta's use of OpenSolaris. When we tested Nexenta, the performance blew us away."

The Nexsan-Nexenta solution has been in use since 2007 and as of 2014 is still going strong with little maintenance required. Walton uses Nexenta's flagship Software-Defined Storage platform NexentaStor with 48TB capacity, which is more than enough for their needs and after seven years, is only running at 70% capacity with plenty of room to grow. Hill says, "We don't have an IT person dedicated to storage. It hasn't taken a storage admin to run, manage, or configure. It was very easy to set up, and then it was up and running. It hasn't given us any hiccups."

"I'm interested in systems that require little management," adds Hill. "The Nexenta Software-Defined Storage system falls under that basket. Some IT systems are promised that way, but in the end they aren't. For us using Nexenta, it's literally been that way all along. If there has been a support issue, which has been very rare, Nexenta's support has been great. They are knowledgeable and have a quick response time."

## Benefits

As Walton prepares for the future, Hill and his team have an eye toward expansion. Using Software-Defined Storage from Nexenta makes hardware updates easy. "We look forward to working with Nexenta when we need to migrate our storage hardware."

## System Configuration

- NexentaStor 48 TB
- Nexsan
- VMware

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