

City of Dothan Fights Crimes with Digital Evidence Storage Solution from Wasabi and Nasuni

"We developed a streamlined, cost-effective digital evidence storage solution with Wasabi and Nasuni that did not exist in the United States."

*– Davis Hart, Senior Systems Analyst,
City of Dothan IT Department*

Overview

Home to more than 70,000 residents, Dothan is the 8th largest city in Alabama, with 13 different city departments supporting everything from public safety and finance to zoning and personnel. The Dothan IT Department is the backbone technology service that supports all the other teams.

"We are a one-stop shop that has to not only support every department as a separate business entity, but every department operates like its own separate business with its own demands and its own needs," said Davis Hart, Senior Systems Analyst with the City of Dothan IT Department. "And a lot of times we go out looking for software solutions for those departments and can't always find one that works."

The Dothan IT team was looking for a versatile, affordable digital evidence storage solution that could easily scale and meet the needs of police officers, investigators, judges, and attorney offices. As the Dothan IT team could not find a comprehensive solution in the market, the department realized the best solution would be the one it made itself. Wasabi and Nasuni were able to answer the call.

Solving Data-Rich Crimes with Advanced Cloud Storage and File Sharing

Today's criminals coordinate their operations with cell phones, and police today amass hundreds of terabytes of digital data that needs to be stored and maintained. From body camera and surveillance video footage, to cell phone and GPS data, public safety investigators need access from anywhere at a moment's notice.

CUSTOMER



INDUSTRY

Government

USE CASES

- Backup and Recovery
- Archiving
- Video Surveillance

CHALLENGES

Create a robust, compliant hot and cold storage and file-sharing capability with price predictability and no egress fees.

SOLUTION

Wasabi hot cloud storage and Nasuni file-sharing software

RESULTS

- New cloud storage and data sharing solution that didn't exist before
- Transparent storage scalability
- Better budget planning
- Hot storage at cold storage prices
- No more annoying transaction fees
- Ability to archive more data longer

“All of that information — including pictures, cell phones, videos, scanned paper documents and all that good stuff — that’s digital evidence coming to us in the form of a file on a computer. We needed a way to store that evidence on-premise,” Hart said. “But we’re not a big enough entity to afford 500 terabytes of storage in our datacenter. We needed a way to offboard that data daily, weekly, and monthly with backups to the cloud.”

There was just one problem. Dothan IT couldn’t find any solution that seamlessly stored data from all devices, created a secure audit trail, and allowed instant, efficient data retrieval whenever it was needed.

“There was no solution on the market for what we wanted,” Hart says. “We went to conferences, we went to different public safety and first responder meetings and conventions, and nobody could say they had a solution to match our needs. What they did say was, ‘Oh yeah, well if you buy our body cameras, it’ll store the body camera footage on our cloud system and you can pay for that storage like this. But as for your digital evidence, that is not covered.”

Some companies would store video from their own products, like car or body cameras, but anything beyond that wasn’t stored. “If a police officer took photos with his cell phone or had to scan in documents, none of that was included in the cloud storage with those systems,” Hart said.

“We kept asking, ‘Well, where’s everybody storing their digital evidence? Where are you storing the pictures of the wrecked car or the crime scene that goes along with the body camera?’ And nobody had a solution,” Hart said. “The response was always that it’s left up to the department. So we decided to partner with a couple of different companies to build our own solution.”

Cloud Services From Wasabi and Nasuni Are Secure and Fast, with No Extra Charges

For the Dothan IT team, it came down to a few key factors: scalability, accessibility, and cost. The department used Wasabi cloud storage and Nasuni file-sharing services to build its own solution that offers fast and easy data retrieval and secure, auditable files (chain of custody) that can be shared with others whenever it’s needed.

Critically, Wasabi doesn’t charge additional fees for API calls or data requests, which means investigators can pull data for their cases whenever they need without extra cost. And because Wasabi offers a single tier of robust storage without complex pricing, the Dothan IT department can expand strategically at a price point that can’t be beat.

“Even some of the internet companies that were working with us would actually charge to pull the data back down through their software,” Hart added. “So of course we left those companies and went with Nasuni. It was one of the huge wins with this solution.”

Scalable storage

The Dothan IT team looked at six different cloud storage software solutions and decided on Wasabi’s high-performing object storage platform. “We needed the ability to rapidly increase our storage and not get billed for it right on top, which Wasabi could do for us at the best price,” Hart said. “It allowed our investigators and police department to continually add digital evidence assets to the system without being stopped for uploading because we didn’t buy enough space. So they can keep doing their job and we just pay the bill when it comes in.”

Leveraging Wasabi and Nasuni for an auditable chain of custody

The authenticity of digital evidence and how it's used can make or break an investigation — and court case. In today's age of Photoshop and AI-generated images, a strict audit trail ensures data integrity. "Let's say I took a photo at a crime scene that's later used in court," Hart said. "Sometime between storing that image and it being on exhibit in front of a judge, it's been altered. We can go into the digital evidence system and follow the trail to see who else accessed the data and what happened to it.

"Or let's say someone makes an error while typing up a witness statement, and now the word says 'he' when it should say 'she,'" Hart added. "We can see the original submission, who touched it, and who changed it. The Nasuni product gave us that kind of clarity and visibility into all the files."

Results

Combining Nasuni software and Wasabi Hot Cloud Storage has created a product that is the first of its kind, Hart said.

"We built one system with a robust storage capability to store data from all sources together and software that keeps a close track of the audit trail," Hart said. "Wasabi's robust backend storage solution and Nasuni's ability to ensure chain of custody work really well together."

Even now as other law enforcement vendors start to offer case management services through their bodycam software, those products are limited in scope. "They've been designed so that once a case is assigned to an officer through their system, it can't ever be assigned to a different officer. That's preposterous. What if the investigator goes on vacation? Our solution offers significantly more flexibility for the department."

The Dothan IT department uses Wasabi for both frequently and infrequently accessed data. Data is backed up daily and weekly, and it can be retrieved from those buckets anytime.

"We have digital evidence that is stored for five years, seven years. Then when you have federal cases or murder trials or basically super bad felonies, that digital evidence is stored forever, for life. It cannot go anywhere."

No egress fees

The IT team has about 200 terabytes of storage with Wasabi, maintaining about half of that on premise. "As soon as that is full, if the crime rate goes up, I'm going to have to consistently put stuff in the cloud and pull it back, repeating that cycle to make room. We're dealing with cases that might have multiple terabytes of digital evidence. Some of these cases might take 15 years to get to court. And those egress fees would just add up and up. We do not want to be charged to pull the data back down. That's what makes Wasabi's lack of egress fees super important."

Data security and compliance

Wasabi's stringent compliance measures were critical, as well. Data centers are equipped with redundant power supplies and backup battery sources, and object storage also meets Criminal Justice Information Systems (CJIS) data security standards. "We can be confident you're doing what you need to protect our data in the Wasabi system," Hart said.

What's Next for the City of Dothan IT Department?

As digital evidence becomes more prevalent in crimes and investigations, the need for storage will only grow.

"Remember when iPhones first came out, they were 64 gigabytes, then 128 and 256, and now they've got 512 gigs and even a terabyte," Hart said. "Right now in video, 4K televisions and security cameras are the biggest thing. What will happen when security camera resolutions are enhanced and data requirements are higher?"

"If we arrest an individual on a felony charge that has lifetime evidence and he has a brand new iPhone with a terabyte hard drive, the entire contents of that phone has to be stored forever," Hart said. "Or, if we arrest someone with 30 TBs of storage on a computer, that's all digital evidence we have to store and access. As data needs grow, so does the demand for storage. It directly relates to the amount of digital evidence that must be stored to handle society."

The Dothan IT department recognizes the complexity of managing storage on a budget and sees Wasabi's streamlined storage capability and efficient pricing structure as the way forward, Hart said. "This is what really speaks to the growth of Wasabi as a company. We expect our partnership with Wasabi to continue to grow, and there's no plan to change that."

ABOUT WASABI

Wasabi provides simple, predictable and affordable hot cloud storage for businesses all over the world. It enables organizations to store and instantly access an unlimited amount of data at 1/5th the price of the competition with no complex tiers or unpredictable egress fees. Trusted by tens of thousands of customers worldwide, Wasabi has been recognized as one of technology's fastest-growing and most visionary companies. Created by Carbonite co-founders and cloud storage pioneers David Friend and Jeff Flowers, Wasabi is a privately held company based in Boston.

©2023 Wasabi Technologies LLC. All rights reserved. WASABI and the WASABI Logo are trademarks of Wasabi Technologies LLC and may not be used without permission of Wasabi Technologies LLC. All other brand names mentioned herein are for identification purposes only and may be the trademarks of their respective holder(s).

Tel [1-844-WASABI-1](tel:1-844-WASABI-1)
Email info@wasabi.com

The Wasabi logo features a green circular icon with a stylized mountain range and the word "wasabi" in lowercase.

wasabi
hot cloud storage
www.wasabi.com