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FOR CIOS, IT DIRECTORS, & BUSINESS DECISION MAKERS

Modernize Your File Infrastructure with Panzura CloudFS

Strategic Migration from NetApp GFC to a True Global File System

The discontinuation of NetApp Global File Cache (GFC)—recently rebranded as BlueXP Edge Cache—has left organizations without vendor support, security updates, or a direct software upgrade path. This creates what can be considered a “forced transition” where your primary strategic priority is the critical selection of a successor platform capable of sustaining global collaborative workflows.

While NetApp directs customers toward internal features like FlexCache or FlexGroup (Volume Caching), these are fundamentally different architectures that, as we see it, lack the real-time global locking and collaborative integrity required for high-concurrency environments. Similarly, while alternatives like Nasuni, Ctera, and Egnyte vie for your business, they potentially introduce synchronization lag or location-level disruption

Panzura CloudFS is the only strategic replacement that solves the “Distributed File Dilemma” by providing a true, peer-to-peer global file system with built-in AI-powered Threat Control and a significantly lower total cost of ownership.

What happened?

- **GFC rebranded & service discontinued:** Rebranding occurred in Nov. 2022; NetApp removed “Edge Caching” from BlueXP on Aug. 7, 2024
- **The successor search:** Organizations must now choose between ONTAP-native features or a dedicated Global File System
- **FlexCache/Volume Caching:** NetApp’s current lead offering creates a single point of failure by suspending global writes if any cache site goes offline.

The Strategic Dilemma

Your organization invested in NetApp Global File Cache to enable distributed teams to collaborate on shared files across multiple offices. That investment delivered real value—centralized data control, local performance at branch offices, and file locking that prevented costly version conflicts.

That platform is now unsupported. Running legacy infrastructure without security patches or a clear path forward creates mounting operational debt and risk.

NetApp removed GFC from its product portfolio in mid-2024. Organizations still running GFC are operating on legacy infrastructure without vendor support, security patches, or a clear path forward. Every day on this unsupported platform increases operational and security risk.

Business Risks of Staying on Legacy GFC

Risk Category	Impact of Inaction
⚠ **Security Exposure**	No security patches means increasing vulnerability to cyber threats. Ransomware and malware attackers specifically target known unpatched systems.
⚠ **Operational Risk**	If a Windows update breaks the GFC agent or cloud orchestration fails, there is no vendor support. Recovery could take days or weeks.
⚠ **Supportability Deficit**	There is no longer a path for vendor troubleshooting or technical assistance. If the system hangs or data becomes inaccessible, your internal IT team is entirely on its own.
⚠ **Performance Degradation**	Legacy software without maintenance updates inevitably slows down as datasets grow and underlying infrastructure evolves. Latency increases over time, frustrating end users and stalling workflows.
⚠ **Compatibility & Tech Debt**	GFC is increasingly incompatible with modern Windows Server versions, security protocols, and cloud APIs. This creates “technical debt” that blocks your ability to adopt newer, more efficient IT tools.
⚠ **Compliance Gaps**	Running unsupported software may violate security policies, audit requirements, and regulatory mandates like GDPR or HIPAA that require current vendor support.

Challenges to NetApp’s Alternative Path

NetApp directs GFC customers to FlexCache or FlexGroup (Volume Caching), technologies designed primarily for accelerating read-heavy workloads or scaling capacity rather than high-performance collaboration.

- **The FlexCache Locking Problem:** FlexCache requires all office locations to remain connected to a central origin to allow anyone to save files. If one branch office loses connectivity, the entire global workforce may be unable to save their work.
- **Single Point of Failure:** This “all-sites online” requirement creates an unacceptable brittleness for distributed enterprises. A network hiccup in one location should not freeze productivity worldwide.
- **Performance Trade-offs:** While FlexGroup provides massive scale, it lacks the intelligent edge caching and byte-range locking necessary for data-intensive applications

Competitive Landscape: Why CloudFS Wins

When moving away from NetApp, organizations often evaluate other file system providers. However, Panzura CloudFS remains the only platform that solves the “Distributed File Dilemma” without the “synchronization lag” found in competitor hub-and-spoke model.

Solution	Why Panzura CloudFS is Superior
Nasuni	Nasuni utilizes a hub-and-spoke architecture that can suffer from latency in heavy collaborative environments. CloudFS’s peer-to-peer mesh provides faster metadata sync and superior byte-range locking.
CTERA	CTERA is often positioned as a gateway-heavy solution. CloudFS’s software-defined approach provides greater flexibility across multi-cloud environments without proprietary hardware lock-in.
Egnyte	Egnyte is primarily a file sharing (EFSS) solution. It lacks the robust, block-level global locking and high-performance local caching required for large-scale CAD, Revit, or media workloads.

The CloudFS Advantage

Panzura CloudFS is a true global file system. It’s not a cache layered on top of storage, but a complete platform that consolidates distributed file infrastructure into a single, authoritative “source of truth” in the cloud while delivering local-speed performance at every location.

✓ **True Real-Time Collaboration** Multiple users can work on the same file simultaneously, editing different sections without conflicts. Teams work in parallel instead of taking turns.	✓ **AI-Powered Data Protection** Threat Control uses ML-based behavioral fingerprinting to detect ransomware and data exfiltration in near real-time. Recovery takes minutes, not days.
✓ **True Real-Time Collaboration** Multiple users can work on the same file simultaneously, editing different sections without conflicts. Teams work in parallel instead of taking turns.	✓ **Multi-Cloud Freedom** Your data lives in your own cloud bucket—AWS, Azure, Google, or on premises. No vendor lock-in. Negotiate directly with hyperscalers for volume discounts.

In terms of sustainable performance, CloudFS uses a distributed metadata fabric that does not “bloat” or degrade with age. Separating metadata from data and utilizing high-performance local NVMe/SSD caching, CloudFS ensures file-open speeds remain consistent regardless of how large the global dataset grows.

Financial Impact: The TCO Analysis

The migration from GFC to CloudFS shifts your cost structure in a way that typically delivers significant savings over a 3-year horizon.

3-Year Total Cost of Ownership Comparison Scenario: Mid-size organization, 10 global offices, 100TB active dataset, 500 users

Cost Category	NetApp GFC	NetApp FlexCache	Panzura CloudFS
Cloud Storage	$1,080,000	$1,080,000	$194,400
Software Licensing	$180,000	$240,000	$450,000
Edge Infrastructure	$120,000	$200,000	$90,000
Backup/DR Solution	$150,000	$150,000	$0*
Support/Management	$90,000	$90,000	$60,000
TOTAL 3-YEAR TCO	$1,620,000	$1,760,000	$794,400

**Note: While CloudFS eliminates the need for third-party backup software, High Availability (HA) and Disaster Recovery (DR) are treated as distinct architectural requirements; features like Local HA (LHA), Global HA (GHA), Instant Node, Cloud Mirroring, and Regional Store provide enhanced resilience but involve specific licensing and infrastructure costs.*

- **Resilience vs. Backup:** CloudFS provides inherent data protection through immutable snapshots, but organizations requiring near-zero Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) typically invest in HA configurations.
- **Instant Node & Recovery:** The Instant Node feature allows for sub-five-minute failover to non-dedicated virtual hardware, serving as a cost-effective alternative to traditional redundant physical servers.
- **Regional Store & Performance:** A Regional Store optimizes local access for geographically dispersed teams by placing datasets closer to users, though it requires additional regional cloud storage buckets.
- **Cloud Mirroring:** For organizations demanding the highest level of durability, Cloud Mirroring performs a real-time write-split between two separate cloud providers, ensuring continuous operations even during a major hyperscaler outage.

Where the Savings Come From

Storage Cost Transformation: GFC and FlexCache require expensive Tier 1 block storage (Azure NetApp Files at ~$0.30/GB/month). CloudFS uses standard object storage (Azure Blob Hot tier at ~$0.018/GB/month). While the unit price is reduced by 94%, the 82% total storage savings in the above scenario accounts for the snapshot data and metadata that provides your built-in backup.

- **Global Deduplication:** CloudFS deduplicates data globally across all sites. Many organizations see up to 70-80% storage footprint reduction.

- **Integrated Backup/DR:** CloudFS's immutable architecture, with configurable snapshots as short as 60-seconds, eliminates the need for separate backup and disaster recovery solutions. This consolidation is reflected in the $0 line item for Backup/DR, as these functions are absorbed into the CloudFS software license.

The reduction in support and management costs stems from CloudFS's consolidated architecture, which replaces fragmented legacy components with a single, global file system. Traditional NetApp GFC or FlexCache environments require IT teams to manage complex Windows-based caching agents, separate cloud orchestration layers, and distinct third-party backup and disaster recovery (DR) solutions.

In contrast, Panzura CloudFS integrates these functions into the core platform, eliminating the need to monitor and troubleshoot multiple vendor interfaces or coordinate separate backup schedules. Automating global deduplication and metadata synchronization, CloudFS reduces the manual intervention needed to maintain performance and data consistency, ultimately allowing you to manage a larger global footprint with much less administrative effort.

Note: This comparison represents a hypothetical scenario based on standardized pricing and typical environment configurations. Actual financial outcomes and performance metrics will vary based on specific organizational requirements, storage environments, regional data egress costs, existing infrastructure investments, and possibly other factors.

The Final Recommendation

The deprecation of NetApp GFC forces a platform decision. Moving to FlexCache sacrifices the collaborative locking integrity that distributed organizations require—such as AEC, manufacturing, and engineering workflows. The “all-sites-online” constraint creates an unacceptable brittleness for organizations with global operations.

Panzura CloudFS provides an architectural evolution. Other solutions lack the enterprise-grade resilience of a peer-to-peer full mesh architecture, which eliminates single points of failure. Byte-range locking enables true co-authoring, immutable object storage delivers ransomware and data loss immunity, and capacity-based licensing on fundamentally cheaper storage transforms the TCO equation.

Get an immediate Proof of Concept for Panzura CloudFS with a focus on validating collaborative locking scenarios and data-resilience requirements.