

Beef up Data Protection with Convergence Infrastructure

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Without a doubt, a company's data is its biggest asset. Buried in that data is everything from proprietary product information to financial data to customer data—in essence, the crown jewels of the organization. Protecting that data is critical, but it has become more difficult to ensure full data protection as data stores have grown larger, the demand for fast access to data increases and security issues take center stage.



The data protection mechanisms a company has in place often can't keep up with these demands. To manage the problem, most organizations have moved from basic data protection strategies to more sophisticated methods, such as snapshots, continuous data protection, deduplication, mirroring and virtualization. These are all excellent ways of protecting data, but they may or may not work well when used together. This can create complexity, causing problems with retention limits and application disruption, as well as with meeting recovery time objectives (RTOs), recovery point objectives (RPOs) and service level agreements (SLAs).

Tackling these inefficiencies and roadblocks requires a new approach—one that can be achieved through a converged infrastructure. This computing model is designed to remove complexity from the data center by including many of the data protection capabilities that most data centers already employ, such as replication, snapshots and backups. In addition, converged infrastructure includes the latest security technologies as well as integrated data protection policies, all managed through a centralized console.

Many converged infrastructure systems have additional functions that protect data at a more granular level than traditional point products do, such as parity protection and protection against drives, nodes or servers, noted Greg Schulz, founder of consultancy StorageIO.

“As part of their architectures, some converged solutions have a process where data is copied to more than one node within a converged cluster. Some even go beyond that to do things like wide area clustering and script clustering,” he said.

One of the biggest benefits to converged infrastructure is flexibility, and that extends to its data protection capabilities. The right solution should map well to an organization's RTOs, RPOs and SLAs, offering granularity of protection. It should also be able to adapt to different architectures, including data centers with a mix of legacy infrastructure and converged architecture.

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Moving to a converged architecture is a growing trend. According to research from 451 Group, 79 percent of enterprises plan to increase spending on converged infrastructure in 2016, and about one-third plan major server and storage refreshes.

To ensure that the converged architecture chosen has the right features and functions for your organization, Schulz recommends performing a thorough analysis of current data protection technology and requirements, and mapping them to available solutions.

“Know your application, your environment and your threat risks—what you need to protect and defend against, both internal and external, accidental and intentional,” he said. “And if you want to be able to leverage your existing investment in current data protection tools, make sure the converged solution you pick can plug into those solutions.”

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