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A Farewell to Storage



Companies considering using managed-storage services must prepare for a major shift in the way storage management is handled - and be willing to give up some of the control

Karen D. Schwartz



For years, the IT department of multinational polymer-fabrication company, Reichhold, did its best to manage the entire IT infrastructure for its worldwide company with internal staff. But about 10 years ago, faced with quickly spiraling data management needs, the company decided to outsource much of its IT management to EDS, an outsourcer based in Plano, TX.



At the time, Reichhold chose to retain internal management of its storage infrastructure, spearheaded by the IT department stationed at the company's Research Triangle Park, N.C. headquarters. But with operations in several countries in North America, South America, Europe and the Middle East, it soon became apparent that managing all of the company's fast-growing storage requirements internally simply wasn't efficient any longer.



Because EDS already managed part of Reichhold's IT infrastructure, the company again turned to EDS to manage part of its storage infrastructure. Today, EDS hosts and manages all data connected to the company's SAP Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which houses manufacturing, personnel, financial and other data, from EDS' data center in Sacramento, Calif.



Some of the reasons multinational corporations like Reichhold are considering turning to a third party to manage storage are similar to those of smaller, more centrally located companies — fast-growing storage, increasingly complex compliance issues, security concerns and insurance against business continuity and disaster recovery scenarios. But in the case of multinational corporations, these issues are often more complex, making the case for moving to a managed-storage services paradigm perhaps even more compelling.



"Multinational corporations have all distributed computing infrastructures, and that generally presents a lot of issues, like providing consistent service levels to the different constituencies within your dispersed organization and dealing with technology biases," says Tim Thompson, Program Manager, Global Offering Management, IBM Global Services, a managed-storage service provider based in White Plains, N.Y.



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"Many companies are very interested in making sure that they meet compliance regulations, but they don't know how to go about doing that. That's something a managed-storage service provider can do for them."

— Tim Thompson, Program Manager,
IBM Global Services

"Other drivers include escalating costs and increasing storage complexity, which can impact an organization's focus on its core mission," says Dave Uhler, Senior Director, Management Services, Sun Microsystems, Santa Clara, Calif. "Trying to plan their business relative to their storage needs is becoming an increasing challenge, so it's sometimes easier to outsource it to a company that can monitor it and provision it as needed. That way they don't have to worry about predicting data volumes," he adds.

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