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MONDAY, MAY 29, 2006

A Farewell to Storage



There are also many ways in which multinational corporations can use managed-storage service providers. In the case of Reichhold, EDS hosts the company's data on its own servers, at its own data center. Some companies choose to use managed-storage service providers in another way — by having third-party personnel present at companies' own facilities, wherever they may be located in the world, to provide a variety of storage-related services.



The services these providers offer within each of these two paradigms span a large range. Depending on the service provider and the customer's needs, these services can include real-time monitoring and management of an entire storage infrastructure via a remote connection, backup and restore services, e-mail archiving, data replication or any combination of these offerings. In addition, most managed-storage service providers offer comprehensive usage and trending reports and data-lifecycle information.



Full Speed Ahead



With such broad storage-management options and compelling issues, one thing is clear — the concept of offloading some or all storage management to a third party is gaining steam, slowly but surely, among multinational corporations.



Consistency and standardization around storage are compelling reasons for multinational corporations to consider outsourcing storage management. Using a managed-storage service provider helps customers ensure technology, service and reporting consistencies, allowing dispersed organizations to gain a global view of their storage environment.



And for companies that operate in many countries, consistency has also become more important, thanks to new data consistency standards being implemented in countries around the world. The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) standard, for instance, is an approach to IT-service management based on best practices collected in the U.K. It is currently required in the U.K. and Australia, and the European community is also moving toward the adoption and certification of the standard.

Requirements for ITIL compatibility in some countries, but not others, increases the complexity of the storage paradigm, however, service providers can ensure that the company is compliant across the board, satisfying all requirements. Another example is the Statement on Auditing Standards (SAS) 70, a U.S. auditing standard that governs controls over information technology and related issues. A global company can be sure that the data the service provider is handling is secure and meets the requirement, when a managed-storage service provider is SAS 70 certified.

Compliance with a growing number of regulations, both national and international, is an important, related issue that is prompting some multinational companies to outsource storage management. "Compliance has a big impact on what you store, how you store it, how long you keep it and who has access to it, and when you're a multinational company, you have to think in terms of the individual geography and not just one set of requirements," says Adam Couture, Analyst, Gartner, an IT consultancy, Stamford, Conn.

Compounding the issue is the fact that compliance regulations can vary from country to country. The U.S.A. has a host of regulations, including the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the Health Information Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act and regulations from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD) — all of which are fairly specific about what data must be retained, and for how long. The Basel II Accord affects a sizable number of countries as an international data-compliance standard targeting financial data, while some countries have their own regulations.

Sorting out which regulations a company's data is subject to, can be a huge headache for a multinational corporation, and is a significant driver in considering a managed-storage service provider that can manage compliance with applicable regulations.

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