SDS can Free You from your Storage Captors; Interview with Nexenta's CEO Tarkan Maner, Part 1

Any organization that looks at the cost of networked storage for the first time may suffer from sticker shock as they look to deploy a solution. Conversely, those who already have a networked storage solution in place may feel bound to keep using the same provider going forward. Nexenta's Chairman and CEO, Tarkan Maner, unabashedly addresses these concerns in this first part of my interview series with him as he first defines Software-Defined Storage (SDS) and then calls out storage providers for holding their customers hostage with overpriced and inflexible storage solutions.

Jerome: What do you see as the primary pain points that organizations are trying to solve when selecting an SDS

appliance??

Tarkan: To understand the overall story here is, one first has to define SDS, because it is contextual. Nexenta does not sell an appliance. It actually sells pure software that runs on any existing commodity server; on any disk or flash that is integrated to any kind of a workload, running on any type of platform whether it is VMware, Citrix, Microsoft, OpenStack, Docker, (or any kind of a container,) or RedHat Linux, it does not matter to us.

That is a very important delineation to understand before answering this question. We do not consider companies just selling appliances that sell software built into them and refer to themselves as "SDS" as real SDS.

Having clarified that, we see the pain point is exactly that, a wrong definition by the customer buying these appliances that cost an average of $1,000 per TB, if you rely upon IDC's and Gartner's numbers. Nexenta brings that cost down 80, 90 percent, to the $100-200 level on any commodity infrastructure.

The second big pain point for these customers: They have been in what you might call the Stockholm Syndrome for the past three decades, held hostage by their captors, these so-called storage vendors. Their hostages are so-called CIOs, trying to figure out how to break through these walls to make sure they have freedom of choice using their storage management software on any infrastructure, any disk, any flash, in a server, for any workload, on a perpetual license.

Nexenta has solutions right now at 3, 4, 5 cents per GB with a perpetual license for any server, disk or flash, supporting any workload on any platform, again from VMware, Citrix, Microsoft, or containers.

So to succinctly answer your question as what problems organizations are trying to solve;

- Number 1, the cost
- Number two, the freedom of choice

This lack of flexibility in cost and choice are driving them to SDS, to true software-defined storage software.

Jerome: Please describe what you see as the primary attributes/features that an SDS software solution should possess?

Tarkan: Number one, it should be totally software. Number two, it should support different architectures and support and service behind it for any vision, meaning you are not trying to throw software to a customer and let them figure things out.

You still help them adapt in the market, making sure their solutions are certified, tested and proof pointed solutions around, whether that's Dell, Cisco, HP, Quanta, Super Micro, supporting any kind of a disk or flash, from Seagate, Toshiba, SanDisk, and everything in between.

Again integration points and service and support around platforms like VMware, Citrix, Microsoft, containers, and OpenStack. Those are the business model attributes I think the customers are looking for in differentiation.

For the functionality, intellectual property (IP) perspective, one key attribute is an open system which delivers block, file, and object interfaces — again for any workload, from one single pane of a glass with orchestration which we provide that works end-to-end.

This gives them an opportunity to use our solution for any workload. Workloads ranging from full archives, active archives, all the way to high performance tier one applications. From a functional perspective make sure the SDS software has the flexibility, attributes and feature functionality to run in a scale-up environment for scale-up

type of applications, supporting block, file, and object as well as run in scale-out environments, again supporting block, file, and object from one single pane for orchestration.

I gave you bit of a long answer, but to summarize, the three attributes that an SDS software solution should possess include:

- One, end-to-end service and support
- Two, reference architectures with the ecosystem, making sure a customer has a rock solid solution
- Three, openness and end-to-end functionality to deliver solutions to the customers that move them out of their expensive model of existence that they have endured for the past three decades

In [Part 2](#) of this interview series, Tarkan talks about Nexenta's competitors and how Nexenta distinguishes itself from them.