SDS's Impact on the Storage Landscape; Interview with Nexenta Chairman and CEO, Tarkan Maner, Part 2

In the last 12-18 months, software-only software-defined storage (SDS) seems to be on the tip of everyone's tongue as the "*next big thing*" in storage. However, getting some agreement as to what features constitute SDS software, who offers it and even who competes against who, can be a bit difficult to ascertain as provider allegiances and partnerships quickly evolve. In this second installment of my interview series with Nexenta's Chairman and CEO, Tarkan Maner, he provides his views into how SDS software is impacting the competitive landscape, and how Nexenta seeks to differentiate itself.

Jerome: You have made comments along the lines that VMware views companies such as [DataCore](#) and [Falconstor](#) as competitors as opposed to [Nexenta](#). Can you elaborate upon your comment?

Tarkan: There are three categories of companies. One is storage vendors that take an old school approach with legacy systems and hardware appliances that have some storage software. Although they call themselves software-defined storage (SDS), at the end of the day, the customer buys a box.

A second category is the companies that come from old legacy storage resource management (SRM) and storage virtualization worlds. Although there are some great companies, who have done some great things, their solutions are a little bit more static and the way they deliver software-defined storage isn't as pure software.

Then the third category is true software-only software-defined

storage. These are companies that are 100 percent software companies. Their software runs on any infrastructure, on any server, on any flash, and can integrate with any kind of a stack.
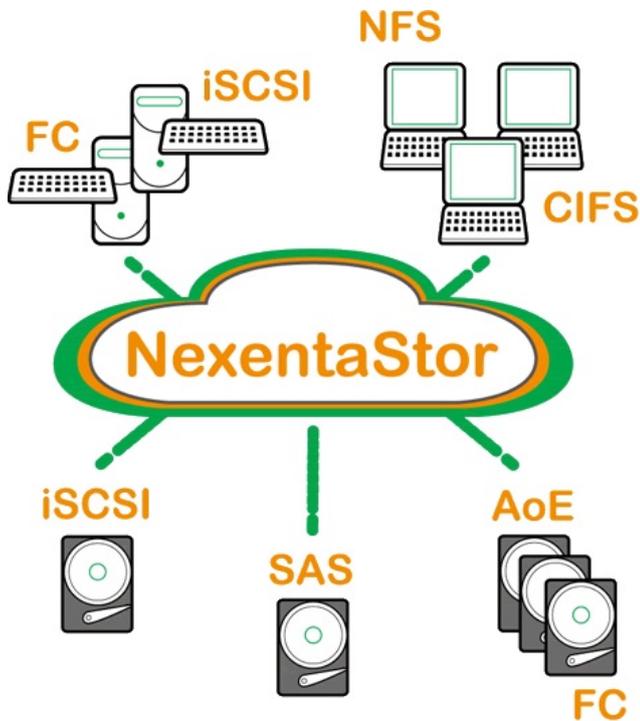
Source: [Nexenta](#)

Nexenta's software-defined storage runs with Red Hat, Canonical, Docker, VMware, Citrix, and Microsoft. We also work with VMware hand-in-hand as partners in the marketplace. Rather than being a software defined storage solution for a specific stack, our vision is a much more expansive, open one.

Our vision is keeping our software-defined storage platform truly independent. Nexenta is the only private company with a customer base of almost 6,000 customers with a very large partner base and OEM relationships that can deliver on any stack, on any server, any disk. That's our differentiation from the rest of the world.

Jerome: What challenges does that create for you?

Tarkan: We are still a small company, although we are growing at a healthy rate, (with 80-plus gross margins,) we still

fight a big fight with very large vendors. Some of these large companies might see open source as a little niche play. But let me tell you, we have a strategic solution supporting a lot of our partner systems like server vendors, disk vendors, flash vendors, and cloud platform vendors. Our open model is expansive; but, at the same time, is very open and aggressive in the marketplace through our partnerships.

Ultimately, our customers tell us this is the way to go. That is the reason we are not shooting for the sun but for the Milky Way. Hopefully we are going to minimally end up at Mars, not in San Carlos.

In [Part 1](#) of this interview series, Tarkan provides his definition of Software-Defined Storage (SDS) and then calls out storage providers for holding their customers hostage with overpriced and inflexible storage solutions.

In the next and final installment in this interview series, Tarkan elaborates on how SDS is moving up to host more tier one applications.