TERiX Maintenance Perspectives
Ways to get more from your hardware agreements

Is Your Cloud Too Puffy?
Unnecessary data bloat can steal cloud savings advantages

April 5, 2011

Keep an eye out for typos.
Details are at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

Out of sight, out of mind
The advantages of an outsourced cloud solution for storage or application services are many, but one disadvantage is that IT managers are not nearly as aware of how much data is getting packed away on a daily basis. Storage is relatively cheap, and performance isn't affected by bloat so much as bandwidth, but the problem can suddenly burst onto the scene when fees jump to the next tier unexpectedly. While users stopped worrying about how big their files were back in the late 90's (if they ever really cared at all), when outsource storage fees are connected in any way to a size variable, IT management has to stay on top of things.

Where it can be really infuriating is with frivolous or non-work-related storage. Stories of nightly backups slogging through gigabytes of employee music downloads and vacation videos are common precautionary tales, but chances are either these activities are breaking established policies, or policies precluding this haven't been written or enforced. The real issue is not files that can be mass-deleted without concern to get back under a given gigabyte/terabyte/petabyte cost tier; the real issue is when critical data is pushing those limits. Businesses dealing with a lot of graphics, whether medical imaging, video editing, or other still or motion graphics are probably more familiar with this, but the advent of HDTV and 3-d rendering for visualizations in all industries can put significant strain even on external cloud-based storage.

Another aspect of this is on the application side, where cost tiers break at given quantities of contacts (online CRM and email marketing tools, etc) or other data limits. In all these cases the issue is also present with on-premise storage and applications; it's important to understand that the cloud model further complicates matters by keeping the data snapshots one step removed from the IT team.

Deduplication, Dashboards, and Decisiveness
Getting a handle on data bloat when you control your own data center can involve a change in hardware, for instance from older to newer tape and

virtual tape storage, and/or the inclusion of one or more deduplication steps. Compression and deduplication will also improve transfer rates since less data is actually being pushed through the pipeline up to the cloud. Likewise, an effective maintenance/management dashboard is key, but no one vendor provides a grand unified dashboard connecting on-premise and outsourced storage, and very few provide one that includes both maintenance and management data.

Often, businesses use a variety of compression and deduplication solutions and mix and match vendors and dashboards for storage and backup because no one vendor provides a single, self-contained best-of-breed solution. When storage and backup are both in the cloud, this can be mitigated somewhat, but few businesses are suited to 100% cloud commodity storage. Moreover, the dashboards for controlling cloud storage are completely different and unrelated to those which control applications, and cloud providers seem inordinately fond of revising their dashboards, moving features around and changing terminologies almost on a whim.

For the present, at least, while there are a number of major players in the offsite cloud/hosting arena, and a few massive players when it comes to onsite data center hardware, no single vendor is likely to ever emerge as the best solution for all businesses in all circumstances. Each OEM and provider will always be better at some things than others, and the ability to mix and match is a better solution than taking a lot of bad with a little good. Multi-vendor and multi-lifecycle approaches will deliver the most agility and survivability to your data and business processes. The practical way to maintain this ability to mix and match for multiple strengths is to choose software and hardware maintenance partners with flexibility and visibilty in mind. If you're running 100% in the cloud, you can avoid the maintenance issues, but if your data operations are at all on-premise then maintaining multi-vendor and multi-lifecycle maintenance contracts are primary approaches to keeping a handle on data growth.

Free Maintenance Consultation

Independent hardware maintenance can usually deliver lower maintenance fees while preserving maximum flexibility and freedom of choice for the customer when it comes to the hardware they run. Talk with a TERiX sales consultant and let us know some basic information about your business and your datacenter locations, and we can get in touch quickly with relevant information so you can compare vendors and capabilities. Click through to find out more!

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