

TwinStrata bridges the storage cloud chasm with intelligence

Company provides transparent access to cloud providers and business applications for enterprise IT

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April 2010

Adoption of cloud storage services is increasingly desirable for organizations of all sizes. A pay-as-you-go model makes sense rather than heavy capital expenditures on storage systems that won't fill up immediately or which reach capacity too fast: storage systems that can scale up and down according to business needs rather than a pool of underutilized storage resources draining a company of data center floor-space, power and cooling. Let's face it, storage systems are costly to acquire, maintain and expand. In the previous few years, company IT infrastructures have been constrained at best, having flat to modest IT budgets. Today, we are seeing companies face expensive technology refreshes in a still uncertain economy. In a world where storage requirements continue to double every year or two, many organizations are now looking for alternative solutions and the cloud is becoming more appealing. With the introduction of cloud storage enablement solutions for accessing the storage cloud's affordable and dynamic resource - and its ability to seamlessly integrate with many front-line business applications, deployment of cloud storage now becomes possible. Secondary data, associated with applications such as data protection, archiving, disaster recovery and daily data management operations become an ideal match with the storage cloud. Mid-sized organizations, many cash-strapped and with minimum IT staffs, would like to adopt a cloud strategy but run into implementation roadblocks.

TwinStrata is bringing to market a software solution with enterprise-class storage features that makes cloud storage transparent to the customer's applications, hardware and systems - leaping the biggest single barrier to cloud storage use - easy to implement access to cloud services.

Issues that hamper cloud storage adoption

Cloud storage concerns start with data availability. IT organizations are leery of losing control of access to vital operational data. Security of data beyond the walls of an organization's own data centers is a big worry. Can anyone trust a third-party organization to maintain regulatory compliance? What about loss of performance and latency when companies need to access data in the cloud? Will bandwidth costs rapidly offset any capital expenditure gains? Is cloud storage just a way to cut TELCOs into the storage pie? All these issues abound. But probably most concerning is the end-to-end performance, security and availability requirement for accessing each cloud storage provider. This raises major concerns about data access times especially in a DR event, preventing unwanted access to private data and will the data be available when we need it. Another concern is being held hostage by getting locked into an unresponsive service provider. Yet another hindrance to adoption entails the prospect of either adopting proprietary cloud storage interfaces or waiting for new standards to emerge and be adopted by both cloud service providers and application providers.

Enter TwinStrata and cloud enablement solutions

TwinStrata was founded in 2007 by an experienced team of storage industry veterans. Located outside of the Technology Corridor of Boston's Route 128, its close proximity to a number of contributors to the cloud service industry is an advantage. The company is beginning to realize its vision for intelligent storage cloud solutions to help mid-sized companies in a variety of industries address challenges related to protecting and managing the growth of business application data. The company is bringing to market software solutions that fall into the cloud storage enablement solution category that address many of the cloud storage adoption concerns outlined above while providing a flexible cloud storage solution without the need to modify existing applications or systems. Solution design features the widest

level of operating system and storage system support. Secure, offsite data protection, coupled with onsite data access, eliminates many of the access, throughput and compliance concerns. Server-based applications can access the cloud via standard storage system interfaces, providing a set of controls to the organization, making cloud storage decisions simple and eliminating costly application modifications. Bandwidth use can be controlled by the customer, with the ability to adopt cloud storage applications incrementally and in a measured manner.

Target market

Mid-sized enterprises – those with a thousand to ten thousand employees -- and medium businesses with one hundred to a thousand employees represent a sweet spot for TwinStrata due to a number of characteristics. First, these companies have constrained IT staffing environments, but are often spending large amounts on IT equipment and services to remain competitive. All organizations in these categories struggle with IT capital expenditures and often stress IT resources in order to achieve operational requirements. A robust cloud implementation scheme allows these organizations to quickly adapt IT infrastructure to business objectives. Further, new capabilities can be added in a non-disruptive manner, allowing the cloud storage capabilities in a variety of applications to be accessed without upgrade downtime. Recognizing the need to develop partnerships at both the cloud service provider and sales channel level, TwinStrata has a delivery model that includes leading firms in cloud services, storage hardware, virtualization, data protection and business applications. Often the leading reason for not implementing new applications is the lack of storage capacity and the cost of acquisition. Transparent cloud access can not only solve the storage problem, but also provides a test bed for the new applications prior to any associated capital expenditure and license fee costs.

Cloud storage enables high value applications

Priority projects for all organizations include disaster recovery, backup and restoration of data, archival, server virtualization, data-migration, rapid availability of large information sets, security and dynamic IT infrastructures that quickly adapts to change based on business requirements. The use of cloud storage provides the means to economically and quickly support these efforts, often with extremely rapid return-on-investment. Storage-intensive applications such as virtualization and thin client usage drive an increasing data center footprint. By spreading many of these functions into a cloud model, organizations can quickly forestall the need to increase data center size and capacity, while holding the line on operating expenses.

SSG-NOW Assessment

With storage services becoming cost effective enough for companies, bandwidth ubiquitous enough, and the availability of cloud enablement solutions, deployment of storage services for specific business data application functions is a realistic alternative for data centers now more than ever. The benefits of adding a cloud storage capability to any IT infrastructure are so great that it has become a priority in organizations of all sizes. But the implementation barriers have been so dramatic that a relatively small number of organizations have implemented a smart internal-external cloud infrastructure. By cleverly addressing the end-to-end performance, security and availability concerns, providing plug-in connectivity with today's standard file and storage interfaces and carefully developing relationships with a large ecosystem of cloud service providers, TwinStrata is poised to become a major enabler of intelligent storage cloud deployments. TwinStrata adds value at both the service provider and using organization. Further, the use of the architectural model embodied in TwinStrata eliminates many of the issues facing the storage industry, which has not yet adopted a unified cloud interface standard, and certainly won't in the near future. We expect TwinStrata to provide a key ingredient to the expansion of cloud service usage.

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