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IBM TotalStorage Virtualization Family
for an on demand world



Storage Vendor Selection Guidelines

Choosing the right storage vendor isn't always an easy task. The following guidelines are designed to help you identify important factors to consider when choosing a storage virtualization vendor.

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Reducing IT cost and complexity are top priorities for many CIOs and IT managers. Storage virtualization solutions are designed to help, but choosing the right vendor isn't always an easy task. Solid upfront research and well-defined criteria can help you to make the right decision.

Storage Vendor Selection Guidelines

Before discussing selection guidelines, let's review some realistic first steps:

Look at Your Applications First. Review the storage utilization and performance requirements of your applications. Consider using a Storage Resource Management (SRM) Tool, like IBM Tivoli Storage Resource Manager to get a view of your current storage usage characteristics.

Identify Meaningful Criteria. Identify the problem that needs to be solved and analyze which solution will provide the greatest return on investment (ROI). Identify meaningful criteria, such as open standards or simplified management, as key requirements.

Be Well Informed. Read a variety of sources to help you determine what is real and what is hype. Best-of-breed solutions need to work in almost any IT environment, and must be resilient to general business shifts such as mergers, acquisitions, restructurings, etc. The more you know, the better you will be able to make informed decisions.

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Storage Vendor Selection Guidelines

Seek vendors that support open standards. An important step to cost containment and flexibility for your storage infrastructure is the ability to avoid vendor “lock-in.” A good virtualization solution should support interoperability between multiple-vendor storage devices and allow you to build upon your existing storage and SAN.

Insist on rigorous interoperability testing. Interoperability between devices on your SAN is key to simplifying storage management and reducing complexity. Make sure your vendor has rigorous interoperability testing in place to support their claims.

Look for vendors that offer complete infrastructure solutions. If a vendor has a limited product portfolio, you could be compromising on interoperability and technical support. Look for providers that can offer you a broad spectrum of products to meet your needs in a given area. You may not need it today, but a wider product selection can help keep your options open for the future.

Prefer suppliers that can demonstrate their solution – either directly or through resellers with a local presence. Whether you choose to work directly with a supplier or with one of their resellers, make sure you insist on credible demonstrations, proof-of-concept and benchmarking activities to help support your decision. Resellers can often provide additional value through localized service and support. Insist upon the commitment to service you deserve.

Ask for a roadmap. With technology changing rapidly and storage becoming independent of server platforms, you need a vendor that thinks about the next step with you. Roadmaps should be linked to a coordinated framework to address a variety of technical and market goals. Vision is often hard to evaluate, but it’s a necessity for any vendor you plan to have you help achieve long-term success.

Find suppliers that are committed to research and development. Long-term basic research and collaboration with public and private research institutes can help vendors bring you best-of-breed technologies faster. No one vendor or institution can have all the ideas. Look for a vendor that collaborates with others and can provide the type of long-term vision you need to support your mission-critical IT purchase decisions.

Watch for vendors that offer an on demand strategy. On demand operating environments can respond to changing needs “on demand,” in real-time; adapt their cost structures and business processes to reduce risk and drive business performance; and optimize their IT infrastructures to cut costs and boost productivity. Virtualization solutions offer an important step forward towards an on demand operating environment. Talk to your supplier about virtualization in relation to an on demand strategy. Ask for concrete examples of next steps, focusing on business flexibility, responsiveness and resiliency to IT threats.

Know the right questions to ask. Virtualization solutions can be implemented in the server, in the storage network or in the storage device itself. Know which type of solution a vendor offers, then know the right questions to ask.

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Questions for vendors implementing virtualization in the server.

Is volume migration from one server to another supported? Are serverless backup and/or migration supported?

Can disaster recovery capabilities be implemented across multiple storage devices?

What is the maximum amount of storage capacity supported?

How does the availability of one server affect the other servers participating in the storage network?

What vendors' storage devices are supported? What backup applications?

Is software required on all servers participating in the storage network?

Does the solution provide policy-based management?

Questions for vendors implementing virtualization in the storage network.

What kinds of storage devices are supported? Can they be from any vendor?

Does the solution rely on third-party products? What kind of interoperability testing is in place? What is the technical support for these third-party products?

What I/O bandwidth limitations are there?

What is the maximum amount of storage capacity supported?

How are scalability and availability ensured?

Are serverless backup and/or migration supported?

Can disaster recovery capabilities be implemented across multiple storage devices?

Questions for vendors implementing virtualization within the storage device.

What kinds of storage devices are supported? Can they be from any vendor?

What is the maximum amount of storage capacity supported?

Can disaster recovery capabilities be implemented across multiple storage devices?

What I/O bandwidth limitations are there? What processor bandwidth limitations are there?

What server platforms and operating systems are supported?

How is storage resource utilization maximized?

Are there any storage management functions handled from the device? What are they?

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