

Promising integration in the Clouds (not every cloud brings rain) IBM and Nirvanix co-operate in delivering storage cloud services

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Introduction

On October 12, 2011 IBM and Nirvanix announced (under the terms of the OEM agreement) the integration of cloud storage technology from Nirvanix as part of an expanded IBM SmartCloud Enterprise storage services portfolio available to customers worldwide.

The True Global Namespace cloud storage technology from Nirvanix allows users to upload a file of any size from anywhere in the world and access it anywhere. It provides customers with continuous access to data at multiple, globally dispersed redundant locations for optimal performance and business continuity. Nirvanix offers Enterprise Service Level Agreements—up to five nines (99.999%) of data availability, a much higher level than offered by other major cloud providers.

This cooperation between Nirvanix proven technologies and IBM as a large IT infrastructure and service provider has all the ingredients to encourage organizations to consider cloud storage services.

Public clouds offer their service over a public network and can be segmented as: consumer use, such as social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), public applications (e.g., email provider, Google apps), and public enterprise clouds (e.g., Amazon S3, Rackspace Hosting).

The business model of the first two types of public clouds is simple, general access, no or low costs, and low SLA levels. The public enterprise cloud is a different story: It needs to allow for limited/restricted access, and requires high security, business continuity, multi-tenancy, high scalability, flexibility, as well as potentially lower costs compared to traditional data centers. The preferable financial model of this option is pay-per-use or Utility Computing.

Current Deployment of Public Clouds and Storage as a Utility

The current providers of storage-as-utility are companies such as Amazon S3, Google and Rackspace Hosting. Between the years 2009-2011 these companies suffered from multiple outages, viruses and data losses which validated users' concerns about data and application availability in the cloud. It seems that the early providers did not deploy a robust infrastructure and robust software stack to avoid such incidents.

Nirvanix Gets It Right

Nirvanix learned from the mistakes of the early storage utility and storage cloud providers¹ by providing flexible storage services with high availability and enterprise-level support. Under its CloudComplete™ portfolio, Nirvanix is the only company that provides variable cloud deployment options, including public, hybrid and private cloud services. The Cloud Storage Network is comprised of eight globally distributed nodes, all part of a single namespace, strategically located to optimize global access (LA, Dallas, New Jersey, Frankfurt, Switzerland x 2, Tokyo and soon San Diego). The network can store users' data in multiple geographic nodes, allowing customers to adhere to regulations regarding data storage locality, as well as providing high data availability and high performance because the storage requests are served from the best network location. Through the global namespace customers can see all their data, no matter where it is actually stored. The Cloud Storage Network ensures a fully-redundant infrastructure, integrated load balancing, physical security, secure multi-tenant file system, and encryption.

Before selecting Nirvanix as an OEM partner, IBM performed an extensive search of the cloud storage providers, including both startups and established companies. After the initial selection and extensive evaluation over a 6-month timespan IBM's conclusion was that Nirvanix cloud storage technology is the most suitable for IBM's global enterprise customer base.

Cloud Market and Competition

A recent [Storage magazine/SearchStorage.com purchasing intentions survey](#) shows that:

"23% of respondents use some form of cloud storage for primary or nearline storage vs. 14% last spring", and "9% ported some of their data center primary data to the cloud in comparison to 4% last year".

These are still small numbers but what is important to watch is the momentum. The main reasons for the slow initial pick-up were users' concerns about data security, scalability, availability, and the business models of the early cloud providers.

The major Cloud Computing players, in addition to those listed above are AT&T (with EMC Atmos), Iron Mountain Digital, Microsoft Azure, Google, and large ESPs such as IBM and HP. Today Nirvanix' cloud serves more than 1200 world-wide end users, 700+ directly, and the rest

¹ *"The clever learn from their own mistakes, the wise learn from other people's mistakes"* – source unknown

by service providers using Nirvanix' cloud technologies. Among the customers are large corporations such as NBC Universal, Johnson & Johnson, Logitech, Warner Bros., Cisco, Comcast, Fox Sports, Royal Bank of Scotland, VMware, and GE. How did Nirvanix, which is relatively small compared to these giants, manage to gain the confidence of these large and sophisticated customers? The answer is, by offering advanced technology, created exclusively for cloud storage, with features answering users' requirements, and an interesting, aggressive business model.

There are many companies calling themselves "cloud suppliers", some of them provide storage, some of them provide software, some of them provide the data centers and services but there is no a single company as IBM that (with this OEM agreement) can provide them all.

Conclusions

Cloud storage service is ideally suited for unstructured data such as documents, spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, health records, images, audio and video files, and e-mail and text messages in particular in vertical industries such as media, entertainment and healthcare. Cloud storage services have the potential to cause an IT revolution in healthcare by providing country-wide access to a patient's vital information, for example.

This IBM/Nirvanix cooperation is bound to emerge as a major force to be reckoned with in the Cloud Storage market. Not every co-operation is promising so much synergy as this co-operation. IBM with its storage portfolio, security features, service infrastructure, global sales reach and Nirvanix with proven storage cloud technologies and experience created a perfect partnership. Finally there is a cloud solution which ensures availability and security to match users SLAs requirements. This OEM agreement will encourage organizations which so far were reluctant to use storage cloud to consider this solution.

The winners, in addition to the both partners, are organization searching for cloud solutions. The losers from the deal will be the other cloud storage provider having to compete against large organization delivering robust and safe solutions and EMC² which provides their storage infrastructure with Atmos.

² There were some rumors in the past few months that EMC planned to acquire Nirvanix to become a real cloud service provider. If the rumors are genuine than the plans are now far away from reality.