

Cool Vendors in Storage Technologies

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Emerging storage vendors offer data center managers and storage administrators fresh answers for their storage challenges. This research details four companies that provide innovative storage capabilities via new delivery methods and performance management, and looks back at two past Cool Vendors.

Zadara Storage

Irvine, California

(www.zadarastorage.com)

Analysis by Gene Ruth

Why Cool:

Zadara Storage presents storage as if it were an on-premises NAS or storage area network (SAN), when in fact, the storage is cloud-based. Unlike traditional enterprise storage, the vendor follows the cloud model by using subscription pricing based on SLA/quality of service measures, rather than requiring an outright hardware/software acquisition. Founded in 2011, Zadara Storage offers enterprise block and file storage as a service. The vendor delivers the storage service as virtual private storage within existing public clouds, or as a turnkey solution delivered on-premises as a private or hybrid cloud solution. Current partners include Amazon Web Services (AWS), Dimension Data, CloudSigma, KVH (Japan), SereniTaaS (Australia and Canada), CoreSite, Vivavo (Singapore), Equinix (globally) and Toshiba (Japan). Hardware and software partners include Cisco, NetApp, Huawei, IBM, Red Hat and VMware. The solution offers a means for organizations to move from a capital expenditure (capex) to an operating expenditure (opex) model, and avoid the administrative overhead of managing their own storage hardware environments and dealing with equipment upgrades and migration. Zadara provides organizations with a high-performance alternative to native public cloud storage. For example, as compared to Amazon's Elastic Block Store (EBS) storage, Zadara provides high-performance, shareable block volumes; large volume size; support for NFS and CIFS; instant and cloneable snapshots; and at-rest encryption with keys held by the customer. In addition, tight control over the physical disk drives for wiping is available if needed. Snapshotting is interesting for those that require database snapshots for disaster recovery purposes.

Challenges:

Offering a cloud-based storage purchasing model means that Zadara must overcome the entrenched mentality of outright hardware purchases that predominates traditional IT organizations. Potential customers must be forward-leaning and amenable to cloud storage environments, whether private or public, that also necessarily include cloud compute capabilities to complement the storage. Since Zadara is a new and relatively small company (approximately 100 customers, to date), IT organizations must be prepared to accept the uncertainty and foibles of a new vendor, including a new purchasing approach to storage. Although Zadara has, in some cases, partnered with large storage vendors (e.g., NetApp-Amazon and Toshiba [in Japan]) to build the underlying platform, the entire Zadara platform has not yet hardened via usage by a large number of customers over a long period of time.

Who Should Care:

Zadara storage is attractive to public cloud users looking for higher performance and more resilience in a cloud compute environment. As a cloud-oriented offering, Zadara storage should be interesting to cloud services providers and managed service providers that wish to rebrand a premium block or file storage service or provide a colocation service. For customers wishing to keep storage on-premises (e.g., government agencies and media companies), Zadara provides the path to an on-premises, opex financial model, without the necessity of putting sensitive data and applications in a public cloud environment. NetApp customers can extend their disaster recovery into the Amazon infrastructure (via Zadara's elastic NetApp Private Storage for AWS) by using Data Ontap's SnapMirror feature directed at the Amazon-offered Zadara storage service, which can also migrate data into Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3) as desired.