4 Cloud Storage Questions Your Customers Demand Answers To

Understanding your customers' cloud computing fears and objections plays a big part in being able to win their trust — and their hybrid storage business.

By Frank Gurnee, VP of channel services, ExchangeDefender

What is the most significant trend in storage?

Though getting storage into the cloud seems like the obvious answer and is definitely a significant trend; we are looking beyond the cloud and to the user experience. It is our belief that the most significant trend for storage is taking a hybrid approach, and giving end users peace of mind by allowing them to combine a local storage approach with a cloud backup strategy. By combining a hardware device with cloud storage, you provide customers with the peace of mind that they are not completely reliant on a cloud vendor, Internet connectivity, or legal concerns of data ownership.

Which vertical markets offer the best opportunities for VARs?

One of the verticals I keep hearing about in the channel is the legal vertical. Many MSPs are seeing this as a prime market due to regulations for data archiving, a large competition base making web presence and SEO important, as well as little time to manage their own infrastructures. These factors have created a demand for IT services and management that make the legal vertical a great fit for managed services.

What advice do you have for VARs that want to sell hybrid storage solutions?

It is important that VARs getting into the storage market research their vendors thoroughly. The concern for many end users is:
• Who owns their data?
• Will the vendor go out of business?
• If so, what will happen to their information?
• And, what type of security/encryption does the storage company implement?
There are many companies that have jumped on the cloud bandwagon and fly by night companies are leaving VARs and customers with little to no recourse when they have infrastructure failures or worse yet — go out

of business. Finding trusted companies that provide business grade solutions, secure infrastructure, and reliable, redundant solutions is critical to your success.

What are some ways a VAR can distinguish its storage offerings from its competitors?

Cloud storage, even in its early stages is highly commoditized. With vendors like Amazon providing public pricing it is difficult to know how to differentiate one solution from another. The answer is simple; get educated on the subject. Know the reliability factors and be ready to answer questions about uptime, availability, and security. Provide options to customers; it isn't always about only having one vendor. The future for VARs is managing many vendors that have solutions that fit the needs of their clients. Not all solutions meet all of the needs for customers, so always have an available solution or the customer will find the solution themselves.

What are some common pitfalls VARs run into when selling hybrid storage solutions?

Not knowing and having answers for common objections. This speaks to the sales approach, but it is a very important factor when selling storage solutions and can be a huge pitfall to a potential sale. Customers are more savvy and many have researched solutions before meeting with an IT professional. It is important to be ready for the potential questions and objections because not having the right answer could make or break a deal. Pricing is another potential pitfall. As mentioned previously, the savvy customer may have a good idea of market pricing, so creating too high of a price may jeopardize a sale. Know how the competition prices its storage solutions and know the value adds and differentiators that set your solution apart from theirs. Provide this information up front, be confident, and own your solution. ●

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