



Power your business for today's dynamic marketplace

It's no secret that data is expanding. According to some researchers, the volume of data is growing by nearly 60 percent annually. From communications to finance and operations, better use of information can strengthen insights and help companies make fast, accurate decisions. Add too much data and the weight of information can strain storage systems and servers—causing decisions to be made with incomplete or inaccurate information. But with a more dynamic infrastructure, information overload is controlled, so IT and business processes can come together to drive significantly more business value, without straining an organization's resources.

Cost-effective, reliable access is everything

As the world becomes smarter and more interconnected, companies need agility to respond to new opportunities and market demands. This takes fast, cost-effective, reliable information access. But for many mid-sized businesses, the cost of managing information steadily increases as new data demands arise. For example, the stopgap measure of adding more servers and storage devices cannot address long-term data management requirements. Eventually, each of these boxes will be filled to the brim where just a little more data will again overwhelm resources.

When access is jeopardized, the rest of the business can suffer. IT service levels are likely to be missed, information security is diminished and audits cannot be performed. In worst-case scenarios, mismanagement of information impacts brand equity as consumers today move faster than ever to terminate relationships with businesses that report data losses and security breaches.

It doesn't have to be that way. Information infrastructure is one of the primary components of a dynamic infrastructure, and can help clients focus on four core capabilities: information compliance, availability, retention and security. With these four pillars in place, companies can reduce costs while also increasing the capabilities of existing IT investments.

"The reason clients choose an information infrastructure approach is specifically to help simplify storage management—which helps reduce costs—but also to make sure we have enough of an infrastructure in place to keep the risk level down, keep the information availability up, and make sure that we're providing the right level of



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data protection,” says Mike Barton, a marketing manager for IBM Systems Storage. “In almost every case, information infrastructure is an incremental add-on to what companies already own, so easy integration is critical.”

Unlocking information assets boosts competitiveness

Information should be treated as a valuable asset. With continuous, reliable and secure access to these assets, mid-sized companies can act on new market opportunities quickly and effectively. The more information a company uses to make decisions, the greater the potential upside.



“We’re helping clients build smarter systems using the wealth of information assets available. These new systems have more intelligence because they can process more information in new ways, and can help create a smarter planet,” says Barton. “Information is what makes these systems smarter. Information must be readily available, and that’s where information infrastructure comes in.”

With a holistic approach to an information infrastructure, companies can deploy tools such as business intelligence (BI) to get more insight and improve decision making. Today’s BI tools, for example, can collect data from more sources and analyze it an order of magnitude faster than before. And as systems become more interconnected, the need to gather information from multiple sources will grow, Barton says.

“Think of emergency generators, equipment on a production line, a fleet of vehicles with GPS tracking—all kinds of business assets have been getting smarter over time,” Barton observes. “As these systems get smarter, they’re able to report their status, receive messages from a central source, and react.”

Storage strategies get the ball rolling

Storage plays a central role in information infrastructure. After all, these volumes of data need to live somewhere. There are a number of ways to make storage simpler and less time-consuming to manage. Instead of continuing to add more servers and storage to keep up with data growth, companies can boost storage utilization up to 30 percent by leveraging virtualization. Plus, virtualization makes the information infrastructure more reliable and saves energy, space and administrative time.

Virtualization and other core information infrastructure technologies are typically most effective when a storage strategy is in place. Establishing a storage strategy goes a long way in ensuring that information is cost-effectively available today, while also laying the foundation for future needs.

“Companies of every size need an information strategy,” explains Barton. “Small companies face most of the competitive pressures and legal requirements as big companies.”

A storage strategy can help set in motion archiving activities, which can be vital to compliance. Few companies can now operate without holding onto records that may be needed in case of an audit or lawsuit. If a business cannot retain and audit information effectively, it may face fines or even make itself more vulnerable to legal action. But information compliance is more than adhering to regulations; it also encompasses the way an organization ensures that information

is managed consistently, according to policy, until deleted. Storage solutions that can help include policy-based archiving and deduplication technology, which speeds up day-to-day operations, as well as data restoration processes.

Security solutions nail down information access

A storage strategy that ensures information access and retention must be coupled with security policies. Like any asset, information is vulnerable to theft and tampering—and when these assets are lost, intellectual property, reputation and customers can vanish as well. “Information is a valuable asset. We know because thieves are working very hard to steal it from companies,” Barton notes.

Information protection solutions can include a variety of hardware, software and services. Media encryption, for example, has minimal cost or performance impact, yet it significantly reduces risk and provides a legal safe harbor in many instances. Dedicated security appliances provide intrusion prevention and theft management. By securing information assets more effectively, compliance, availability and retention become simpler, too.

In today’s information-driven world, where everything is becoming more intelligent and interconnected, information becomes one of our most valuable assets. By managing and structuring this asset prudently, midsized businesses can drastically reduce information risk and ultimately enable new competitive capabilities essential for continued success in the global marketplace. ●

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