In This Paper

- In cloud environments, using multiple point products for data management often results in diminishing returns.
- Single-vendor solutions enable enterprises to leverage their cloud investments.
- Management efficiencies are considered the leading advantage of using a single-software platform.
Data is the lifeblood of any organization and increasingly one of its most valuable assets. Now, more than ever, enterprises rely on data to maintain and grow their business. But with data proliferating at an explosive pace, storing, backing up, securing, archiving and providing access to that data becomes increasingly difficult.

In the past, data management meant organizations would cobble together a variety of solutions to backup, protect, and archive data. Ideally, these solutions integrated with one another, but often they did not.

Then the cloud came along. The emergence of cloud offered a paradigm shift for data management regardless of whether the organization was looking for a public cloud, private cloud or combining the two into a hybrid cloud. While the cloud brought many advantages to organizations, it also introduced a host of complications, particularly around data management. Data management with multiple point products became much more complicated in cloud environments, often resulting in diminishing returns.

But solutions are out there. One way to ensure end-to-end data management compatibility is to purchase a comprehensive solution from a single vendor. Single-vendor solutions have been around for a while and are growing in popularity. Single-vendor data management solutions may include a combination of backup, archive, content-based retention, snapshot management, replication, and data recovery. Many of these solutions enable enterprises to leverage their cloud investments.

A recent survey performed by QuinStreet Enterprise Research found 35 percent of respondents use between one and three data management solutions. Although 56 percent are using four or more solutions, two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated they are planning on consolidating the number of solutions their organization currently has in use.

QuinStreet Enterprise Research, part of QuinStreet Enterprise, the publisher of well-known IT media brands that include eWeek, Datamation and CIO Insight, surveyed 223 IT decision makers in organizations with 500 or more employees to learn what they think about using a single platform for data management. Their answers yielded a great deal of insight about the preferred approach as well as the benefits and challenges IT professionals are likely to face when using the cloud.

"Nearly three-quarters of respondents believe improved management efficiencies are a key advantage of using a single software platform."
Respondents had little trouble identifying the advantages of using a single software platform to manage all kinds of data from a single interface, as noted in Figure 1. Nearly three-quarters believe improved management efficiencies are a key advantage of using a single software platform.

However, for nearly one-third of respondents, these advantages were not enough to warrant a change. These enterprises are satisfied with their current suppliers and see no reason to consolidate, or they have data management contracts tied to other security, server, and storage products supplied by multiple vendors. Other reasons cited for not considering a single software data management platform were the additional cost and retraining of IT staff and a lack of awareness of a single supplier’s offerings at a competitive price (see Figure 2).

For the 67 percent planning to consolidate, the most important functionality spans the gamut of what data management vendors offer. Interestingly, although management efficiencies were cited as the No. 1 advantage of using a single software platform, it is the storage-related features that were the most sought-after by far. As Figure 3 shows, disaster recovery leads the pack with 80 percent of respondents interested in disaster recovery management functionality. Immediately behind that were archive, replication, and deduplication.

Beyond storage capabilities, more than half of the respondents rated workflow automation (58 percent), self-service access (57 percent), and licensing option flexibility (57 percent) as important.

Cloud Data Management Gaining Ground

Increasingly, enterprises are turning to the cloud to meet their compute and storage needs. The cloud, whether public, private or a hybrid of the two, offers numerous advantages with minimal investment upfront. As cloud technology matures, it is fast becoming the ideal medium on which to perform data management tasks.

“The cloud, whether public, private or a hybrid of the two, offers numerous advantages with minimal investment upfront.”
Increasingly, enterprises are exploring its capabilities. Survey respondents were no exception.

For many enterprises, a private cloud offers the desired or needed level of the security and control to allow a cloud-based infrastructure to be deployed. As Figure 4 illustrates, of the 70 percent using cloud for data management tasks, nearly half are using a private cloud. The remaining half are split between hybrid clouds and public clouds.

Among those using public or hybrid clouds, Amazon Simple Storage service (S3), Microsoft Azure Storage, and Google Cloud Storage were the most popular, with 39 percent of respondents using S3 and Azure, and 31 percent of respondents using Google Cloud Storage. HP Object Cloud Storage, Amazon Glacier, IBM/Softlayer Cloud Object Storage, and Rackspace Public Cloud Files also had a significant user base among respondents.

As organizations move data to the cloud, data management must follow. Survey respondents were well-versed in performing data management tasks in the cloud. As Figure 5 shows, 70 percent of the respondents are doing at least some of their data management tasks in the cloud.

Respondents’ reasons for considering cloud-based data management were varied. For those using hybrid or public cloud, the potential cost savings of moving to the cloud was by far the biggest driver. More than 80 percent of respondents said that. Figure 6 highlights the primary benefits survey respondents sought in their move to cloud-based data management.

“For those using hybrid or public cloud, the potential cost savings of moving to the cloud was by far the biggest driver.”
The cloud brings its own set of challenges to the table. To achieve these benefits, a number of capabilities must be in play. Some, such as on-demand capacity and interoperability between on- and off-premise data, are unique to the cloud. Others, like security and monitoring tools, are universally sought-after capabilities.

Figure 7 reveals the top five capabilities when leveraging a cloud-based approach to data management tasks. The vast majority of respondents felt security options and settings were most important.

The cloud, like any platform, has its limitations. Among the 30 percent not using a cloud-based solution for data management tasks, speed, complexity and compliance were among the top reasons for not bringing data management to the cloud. Figure 8 shows the top five inhibitors ranked by respondents as being extremely important or very important.

Our respondents indicated that using a single platform solution is a pathway to a smooth deployment. A full 69 percent of respondents found that using a single platform solution or supplier for data management both eased and accelerated implementation. However, many are not quite ready to put all their eggs in one basket. While more than half of the respondents felt using several solutions for data management from a single supplier was ideal, a sizeable number of respondents also indicated that deploying several solutions for data management from different suppliers was preferred.

Conclusion

As data becomes ever more valuable to enterprises, the solutions selected to manage it become ever more critical. Today’s enterprises have myriad choices about how to back up, secure, archive, and monitor data. The migration to the cloud has only made the landscape more complicated and resulted in a proliferation of additional management tools.

Many enterprises are looking to reduce the number of solutions they have in place. In many cases a single software platform for data management is the most effective way to deliver the needed capabilities while presenting the opportunity to simplify, reduce risk and unlock value from managed data.

Methodology

This survey was conducted online between March 30 and April 11, 2014 on QuinStreet Enterprise business-to-business websites. Respondents were initially contacted via email, with the first 100 participants to complete survey receiving a $10 Amazon gift card. The 223 respondents who completed the survey are IT decision makers working at organizations with 500 or more employees. This survey carries a + /- 6.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.