Insightful Questions for NetApp’s Conference
By Andrew Glinka | October 2021

NetApp holds its annual Insight user conference this week, which will undoubtedly bring the standard bevy of product updates and pre-announcements. NetApp’s recent announcements have focused on its aging ONTAP architecture and they have conveyed an abundance of feeds and speeds, but have been light on innovations that speak to the advancing data requirements of modern applications. With its portfolio based almost entirely around its ONTAP storage OS and bolstered by acquisitions rather than internal development, it’s fair to ask, “Where’s the innovation?” Let’s pose questions to ask NetApp at Insight and explore how Dell Technologies answers those questions with a broad and diverse portfolio that is rich with comprehensive client and infrastructure solutions.

ONTAP – Does One Size Fit All?

NetApp’s ONTAP-based storage arrays offer a one-size-fits-all storage approach that often can result in compromises, narrowly focused innovation, and complexity.

Will Insight 2021 bring advancements to the ONTAP platform to enable highly consequential functionality for the advancing storage requirements in modern data centers?

NetApp’s federated approach to clustered storage requires specially trained experts to tune and balance resources across controller and storage silos, creating management headaches for busy IT teams. Performance-hungry applications need intelligent controllers to pool resources and manage spikes in load without manual intervention. They need policy-driven automation to place data on the most appropriate storage and then continuously tune in the background to ensure optimal performance with growth and change. Will NetApp address these requirements with an AI/ML-based automated data placement engine like PowerMax offers? The architectural approach that views all datacenter problems and user requirements with a single solution can cause inefficiencies and bottlenecks in how your business delivers outcomes. How will NetApp address this issue?

Dell Technologies considers improved speeds inherent with platform lifecycle advancements to be table stakes. What matters more is flexible solutions and improved outcomes for your organization or business. A broad portfolio of purpose-built storage options enables you to tackle problems with the best answer, and as a result, better outcomes. Dell Technologies offers a variety of platforms that are ground-up-designed for the most demanding data requirements.

Dell EMC PowerScale OneFS is a good example. This solution addresses your fastest-growing and most capacity-intensive unstructured data requirements with scale-out capability that enables up to 10x more nodes than NetApp ONTAP clusters¹ and delivers up to 4x greater sequential throughput for Google Cloud services.² PowerScale is complemented by an extraordinary API-integrated software ecosystem

¹ Based on Dell analysis, Sept. 2021.
² Based on Dell analysis comparing peak throughput at 100 TiB for Google Cloud, Sept. 2021.
that gives you a leg up when it comes to ransomware protection with integrated air gap technology that enables a protected offline vault as the last line of defense against cyber-attacks. Where is data vaulting with air gap functionality in NetApp’s ONTAP ransomware solution?

PowerStore’s end-to-end NVMe architecture consolidates workloads and reduces IT burden with streamlined load balancing for cluster management. PowerStore X and AppsON allow you to tackle challenges at the edge with a new approach, providing a home for general or storage-intensive apps directly onto PowerStore to service your existing VMware environment. Can NetApp innovate their systems to offer a consolidated deployment model for storage-hungry edge workloads?

PowerMax supports the high-performance demands of modern applications with tightly coupled controllers and support for persistent SCM for low-latency requirements, both of which are currently absent from NetApp’s single OS vision. Can a singular vision focused on ONTAP deliver outcomes when so much workload diversity exists in the modern datacenter?

Is NetApp prepared to fulfill your multi-cloud strategy?

NetApp makes a lot of noise about its cloud capabilities, but is its narrow focus on ONTAP-related data replication enough to fulfill your multi-cloud strategy? Cloud Volumes ONTAP enables data replication between clouds, but you still have the financial burden of egress charges, along with the challenges of contracting, architecting, and lifecycle managing new infrastructure across hyper-scalers.

Will NetApp announce improvements to Keystone to enable your business to transform faster?

NetApp Keystone requires a traditional sales motion with no option for self-service ordering, directly impacting your agility and slowing the deployment of resources when your business needs them the most. Now contrast NetApp Keystone to Dell Technologies APEX Data Storage Services, which provides a self-service ordering experience through APEX console that requires no up-front payment to get started. With a time-to-value in as few as 14 days\(^3\), APEX Data Storage Services gives your business the agility to address dynamic growth and change that few vendors can match.

Will NetApp give you a turnkey model for leveraging VMware Cloud as part of your multi-cloud strategy? APEX Cloud Services with VMware Cloud simplify multi-cloud needs with a turnkey operating model that provides software-defined compute, storage, and networking with secure and consistent operations across multiple cloud environments—private, public, and edge. APEX gives you complete control over your technology strategy. NetApp does not—and cannot—match the breadth of technology services available with Dell Technologies’ APEX, which enable you to achieve the outcomes your business requires across the full spectrum of modern infrastructure.

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\(^3\) Applies in US, UK, France, and Germany. TTV measured between order acceptance and activation. Subject to customer acceptance of APEX terms, credit approval and site qualification, which must be completed before order placement, and customer participation in pre-deployment planning. Product availability, holidays and other factors may impact deployment time.
When will NetApp offer a more comprehensive ransomware protection solution?

Protecting your data is more critical than ever as cybersecurity threats generate headlines and massive impacts on businesses and customers. Today’s systems require a modern approach to help protect from malicious cyberattacks, but even that may not be enough for a sophisticated attack.

Are NetApp's immutable snapshots enough protection from malware and ransomware if your firmware and networks are corrupted?

Without an air-gapped data vault, how can you create a defense of last resort through network isolation of your business-critical data? Will NetApp announce a more comprehensive solution at Insight to help secure your data?

Dell Technologies has a long history of securing customer data through innovation in both products and software. Helping you identify and stop threats is in our DNA, and now Dell EMC PowerProtect and PowerScale offer cyber recovery solutions that go well beyond simple snapshot protection. Offline physical and logical air-gapped vaults completely isolate data from the network, offering a safer repository against dangerous malware that can spread and corrupt snapshots.

The impact of having your data held for ransom can be devastating. Can you afford an approach that doesn’t include more robust protection? Settling for anything less than a secure and resilient backup and recovery solution is like being “penny wise and a ton foolish” when it comes to ransomware protection.

What is the next step for NetApp HCI customers?

Very soon after entering the market in 2018, NetApp announced that they are ending the availability of their short-lived HCI “Hybrid Cloud Infrastructure” compute appliance in March of 2022.

NetApp recommends servers from other vendors, including Dell, to expand compute for existing environments. Is this the turnkey hybrid cloud infrastructure that NetApp promised customers just a few years ago? NetApp’s departure from a rapidly growing market leaves a gaping portfolio hole for customers that deploy HCI clusters to simplify operations, scale and expedite the delivery of outcomes.

Can NetApp accelerate datacenter modernization missing such an important tool?
Dell Technologies holds the #1 share position in Hyperconverged Systems\(^4\) according to IDC for a reason. Through our diverse HCI portfolio, we help customers focus on outcomes instead of infrastructure.

VxRail’s turnkey appliances expedite installation and make it easy to maintain with integrated lifecycle management that keeps the guesswork out of complex updates. Dell customers have additional choices to build out their cloud experience with APEX Private and Hybrid Cloud offerings. These consolidate compute, storage and virtualization, while automating deployments and providing complete single-click lifecycle management and deep VMware Cloud Foundation integration.

APEX’s flexible consumption choices for hybrid and private cloud enable your business to deploy infrastructure using cloud-like on-demand designed for OPEX\(^5\) and resource flexibility to keep your organization cloud agile.

Dell’s HCI offerings extend beyond VxRail as well. PowerFlex’s software-defined storage platform keeps ANY of your mission-critical, SLA-sensitive workloads running smoothly, whether bare metal, virtual or modern, and containerized. PowerFlex’s design enables you to respond to changing needs quickly while maintaining predictable performance for your deployments. Today’s modern data center relies on HCI to provide flexible and fluid outcomes traditional architectures deployments aren’t optimized for. Are you shortchanging your organization with a vendor that lacks necessary solutions to support today’s massive modern deployments and applications as part of the IT industry’s digital and multi-cloud transformation trends?

Conclusion

It’s yet to be seen how NetApp plans to address the many gaps in its portfolio and how long it will take for NetApp to tackle the diverse challenges in modern data centers. The bottom line is that we will probably see more of the same at Insight 2021 since NetApp seems determined to confine its innovation to ONTAP and keep its customers rooted in a one-size-fits-all approach to infrastructure.

Here’s a final question: How long can customers afford to wait for NetApp to address the significant gaps in its portfolio?

To learn more about how Dell Technologies can address modern IT challenges, reach out to your local Dell representative or partner for new insights on how to accelerate your transformation with a broader and deeper portfolio of solutions - client, infrastructure consumption, and financial models that NetApp can’t match.

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\(^4\) IDC WW Quarterly Converged Systems Tracker, Q2, 2021, Vendor Revenue

\(^5\) OpEx treatment is subject to customer internal accounting review and policies