

# The Incomplete Vision from NetApp Insight

By Andrew Glinka | November 2022

Insight 2022 has come and gone, and like the groundhog, NetApp saw its shadow. Looks like we're in for another year of aging ONTAP storage arrays and bold cloud announcements that end up being nothing more than unintegrated acquisitions or relaunches of existing products.

This year Insight seemed a shell of its former glory. Once a multi-million dollar four-day, international, in-person event with a fanfare that would match the World's Fair, Insight 2022 was relegated to a one-day, virtual event for each geo this year. The content of the event did not fare much better. The show's highlight was the introduction of BlueXP, a rebranded version of NetApp's Cloud Manager with a UI facelift. Other announcements were equally lackluster, ranging from a standard ONTAP code update to repurposing existing monitoring tools under the guise of sustainability to rehashing the capabilities of the recent CloudCheckr and InstaClustr acquisitions. NetApp, how many times will you tell us how these acquisitions will be integrated one day?

Notably missing was any announcement of coming upgrades to NetApp's portfolio of storage arrays, some of which date back to 2018. Overall, there wasn't much innovation to speak of, at least nothing that will substantially change the outcomes NetApp can deliver over the next year. That said, what insights can we take away? Let's unpack the announcements and find out if there's any substance behind the messages.

## Cloud Manager Redux: NetApp BlueXP

NetApp BlueXP takes its cues from its Cloud Manager heritage, promoting a unified experience across hybrid multi-clouds. This is a nice message, but BlueXP maintains NetApp's monolithic, ONTAP-focused approach to the cloud. Cloud strategies relying on an ONTAP-based data estate can hamstring your performance and scalability, with most solutions focused on storage data rather than applications or workloads. Shouldn't the utility and flexibility of the cloud rely on underlying architectures that foster future growth?

Managing a hybrid cloud future requires the right tools and a complete strategy that can help today and offer visionary solutions for tomorrow's challenges. Dell's broad portfolio helps enable a better future, with diverse architectures, consumption models, and a bright vision for how businesses can tackle the ongoing challenges of modern IT. NetApp's BlueXP announcement does nothing to close the significant capability gaps that provide customers with options for innovation. There's more to the cloud than just storage, here's what NetApp is still missing:

- The broadest DevOps-ready platform portfolio that's fully validated with all major hyper-scalers and container orchestration platforms<sup>1</sup>.
- A solution like Dell PowerFlex that offers the broadest support for hyper-scaler and container orchestration platforms for file and block, across bare metal and hypervisors, delivered on a single infrastructure platform<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Dell analysis of integrated systems for Kubernetes distributions, March 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Dell analysis of integrated systems for Kubernetes distributions, March 2022.

- The flexibility of consumption across the entire Dell APEX portfolio, a more expansive as-a-Service offering for your entire technology strategy.
- Hyperconverged infrastructure options like VxRAIL help simplify and expedite hybrid cloud deployments, reducing operational overhead for administrators.

NetApp forces a one-size-fits-all approach to address business challenges. Dell's vision leverages a portfolio of industry-leading specialized products and flexible consumption offers to deliver world-class outcomes with a holistic view of your entire technology strategy. [Project Alpine](#) further will enhance the opportunity to drive cloud strategies with operational consistency across environments. BlueXP isn't a skeleton key to the cloud, it's a fresh coat of paint on the same compromises NetApp forces with such a limited view of technology. Can you afford to limit your vision to the here and now? Or would you prefer to talk about the future, where you're going, and how Dell can help take you there?

## ONTAP still leaves a lot "off-tap" for scale-out NAS workloads

There wouldn't be a NetApp Insight conference without updates to ONTAP. This year, NetApp addressed a few of the less-critical inconveniences of its software but predictably left the elephant-sized ones alone. For example, NetApp left its RAID-based architecture and all the provisioning layers in place.<sup>3</sup> As a result, management complexity can continue to increase as data environments grow and change. To address increasingly menacing security threats, NetApp tweaked its snapshots and added a few filesystem security enhancements but did not introduce acyber vault capability to enable protection of last resort. And finally, NetApp made a baby step toward balancing data across an ONTAP cluster but has thousands of miles to go before it can continuously balance data across nodes in a distributed scale-out cluster.

Here's a supplemental insight to NetApp Insight: Dell PowerScale has a lot more "ontap" than NetApp when it comes to unstructured data storage. PowerScale's ability to continuously auto-balance data across a global namespace is a key advantage to staying simple with growth and change, versus evolving toward complexity.<sup>4</sup> PowerScale's integrated capability to help protect data from cyber-attacks with not just tamper-proof snapshots, but also multi-vector ML-driven detection analytics and robust storage-driven automation does more to help protect against cyber-attacks.<sup>5</sup> And PowerScale brings the world's highest flexibility to crucial operations such as deployment, application access, lifecycle management, data management, and software ecosystem management versus a mix of APIs, GUIs, CLIs, and multi-volume runbooks.<sup>6</sup>

## Insights on Storage Efficiency

Efficiency is a top priority as energy costs rise and awareness of our impact on the climate becomes more apparent. NetApp promoted its efforts, announcing an improved storage efficiency guarantee and

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<sup>3</sup> [NetApp introduces Blue XP data management – Blocks and Files](#)

<sup>4</sup> [AutoBalance | PowerScale OneFS Job Engine | Dell Technologies Info Hub](#)

<sup>5</sup> [h18854-sb-uds-cyber-protection-and-recovery.pdf \(delltechnologies.com\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Dell vs Competition | Dell USA](#)

monitoring capabilities for power usage . While encouraging to see NetApp make strides, how can their underlying architecture help or hinder your goals for storage efficiency?

NetApp's new 4:1 storage efficiency guarantee for block workloads almost brings it up to par with Dell, we don't limit your DRR guarantee to block workloads or confine you to a single architecture choice. Dell PowerStore and PowerMax 4:1 data reduction guarantee<sup>7</sup> for open systems can increase storage efficiency and performance helping reduce rack space required for block workloads which could also aid in reducing power consumption while offering different, purpose-built architectures to achieve diverse business outcomes. NetApp also can't consolidate like PowerMax, which supports mainframe with an industry first 3:1 guarantee <sup>8</sup>enabling further efficiency gains without sprawling into separate arrays.

What about expansion? It's important to right-size your environment and make the most of what you have. NetApp's traditional RAID has unused dedicated spares and can require you to overbuy capacity to fit into RAID schema. PowerStore and PowerMax use innovative data resiliency technology, Dynamic Resiliency Engine and Flexible RAID, that enable granular, individual drive expansion while maximizing the benefit of your investment without dedicated idle spares waiting for failures.

Finally, rack space can factor into the cost of power consumption , and NetApp can take up a lot of real estate. Usable storage depends on several factors, but comparing raw NVMe capacity can indicate how much extra space NetApp demands. PowerStore has identical capacity scalability across all models, providing up to 1PB of raw NVMe storage in just 6U. NetApp's A400 requires 10U and the largest dual-controller model in the A-series family, the A900, requires a massive 14U to hit 1PB of raw NVMe. Even an updated storage efficiency guarantee may not help significantly reduce the space those arrays can take up.

We are proud of our ongoing efforts to make our storage more efficient helping contribute to our sustainability goals. Our recent hardware updates emphasize our commitment and showcase our advancements:

- PowerMax's updated platform offers up to 80% less kVA per terabyte<sup>9</sup> , which can yield power savings with 7X more capacity per array in half the rack space<sup>10</sup> and designed for 99.9999% availability for a single array<sup>11</sup>.
- PowerStore 3.0 delivers up to 61% more data density per rack unit<sup>12</sup> and up to 60% more IOPS per Watt<sup>13</sup>.
- Dell Technologies is an IT industry leader in ENERGY STAR <sup>®</sup> certifications for storage in the U.S., qualified configurations are available in select models.

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<sup>7</sup> Storage Data Reduction Guarantees: Requires customer signature and purchase of ProSupport Plus or ProSupport with Mission Critical. Applicable products include All-Flash Storage products only.

<sup>8</sup> Based on Dell analysis, April 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Based on Dell's internal analysis comparing power (kVA) per effective terabyte of the PowerMax 2500 compared with the PowerMax 2000, March 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Based on Dell's internal analysis comparing Effective Storage Capacity of the PowerMax 2500 compared with the PowerMax 2000, March 2022. Actual storage capacities will vary.

<sup>11</sup> Based on Dell's PowerMax specification for a single PowerMax 2000, 2500, 8000, or 8500 array, March 2022. Actual data availability will vary.

<sup>12</sup> Based on Dell analysis comparing maximum effective capacity for largest PowerStore configurations with PowerStoreOS 3.0 vs. PowerStoreOS 2.0. Assumes average 4:1 data reduction. Actual results vary.

<sup>13</sup> Based on Dell analysis comparing maximum IOPS per Watt for PowerStore 1200 base appliance configurations with PowerStoreOS 3.0 vs. PowerStore 1000 base appliance configuration with PowerStoreOS 2.0. Actual results vary.

Beyond our storage features, the [Dell Future Proof program](#) (including Tech Refresh and Recycle) and [Dell APEX as-a-Service](#) offerings give you even more innovative ways for efficiently managing your IT infrastructure. Guarantee improvements alone can't match Dell's choice of purpose-built architectures and consumption-based offerings that can help make your data center more efficient.

## Final insights

NetApp's conference was more style than substance. Dell Technologies contrasts sharply with NetApp's limited scope and direction, using industry-leading technology across numerous categories to help propel your business into the future. How long are you willing to wait for NetApp to catch up?

Reach out to your local Dell or partner representative to learn how Dell Technologies can address modern IT challenges and accelerate your transformation with a broader and deeper portfolio of solutions - client, infrastructure, consumption, and financial models - that NetApp can't match.



**About the author:** Andrew Glinka is Vice President, Competitive Intelligence at Dell Technologies. Andrew is an 11-year Dell Technologies veteran and brings over 23 years of experience in technology sales, management, and operations. Prior to assuming his current role, Andrew served as Global Director of Sales Strategy for the Data Protection Solutions Division. He has also managed the Global Software Sales team as well as other sales teams in the Data Protection Solutions Division. Prior to joining Dell through the EMC acquisition, Andrew owned and operated an IT Managed Services business in Virginia for over 8 years before successfully selling the company.