Nominee: FalconStor

Nomination title: FalconStor FreeStor Software-Defined Platform

In order to effectively address today's modern IT challenges, a holistic approach to storage infrastructure management is needed—one that provides data services and a deep insight across different storage vendor platforms and storage technologies into a single pane of glass view of the health and availability of your critical data and storage infrastructure.

FreeStor is the only true software-defined storage architecture that simplifies the intelligent delivery of data services across virtual, cloud, hybrid/cloud, SDS and Flash storage environments, allowing IT managers to maximise storage utilisation and reduce costs while providing intelligent insight into operational efficiencies - without investing in all new technology or being forced to replace older technology. FreeStor uses ground-breaking Intelligent Abstraction® technology that works across any and all storage infrastructures - regardless of platform, type, or vendor - all at a single price. It allows IT teams to gain ultra-control of their storage heterogeneously across legacy, modern and virtual environments. FreeStor is built on four key pillars, which provide an organisations network with:

- Business continuity –This ensures that files, applications, systems, and even entire sites are always available. FreeStor eliminates vendor lock-in while virtualising the entire storage infrastructure.

- Optimisation – FreeStor's optimisation with inline deduplication means lower storage costs and increased backup efficiencies

- Migration and protection – A unified platform for legacy and virtual storage resources to migrate seamlessly between tiers and disparate systems

- Disaster Recovery (DR) – FreeStor automates complex recovery processes, ensuring all of your data can be recovered before business operations are impacted, wherever you travel via your mobile or tablet interface.

The key to FreeStor is the Intelligent Abstraction layer. This is a patented approach, which allows data to migrate to, from and across any platform, physical or virtual. Front-end applications and servers link to back-end storage venues to allow optimised data storage, manipulation and protection without concern for protocols. It allows storage administrators to use the FreeStor GUI from any browser, smartphone or tablet. The high-availability platform includes Active-Active I/O and REST APIs to enable MSP and cloud providers to integrate FreeStor in their management consoles.

FreeStor combines cutting-edge horizontal platform architecture with the ability to leverage new storage options. These results in greater efficiencies, reduced downtime, lower costs, and improved simplicity. This FreeStor layer makes it very efficient and easier to manage all storage

arrays, no matter what type of media or who they are from. It gives users additional features that other vendors can't provide such as snapshot and DR across platforms and arrays. It has a centralised management system to enhance the simplicity of managing your storage infrastructure and utilisation capabilities. This in turn provides a huge cost saving and optimises performance without the need to buy costly new or modern storage arrays.

Although FreeStor doesn't directly manage the different storage arrays, it uses the hardware vendor's interface to manage the LUNs. FreeStor analyses these LUNs, in order to keep latency and overheads to a minimal, thus allowing the end-user to benefit from the other services from the FreeStor layer. In addition, FreeStor is sold using a subscription OpEx model, meaning customers now have the ability to predict foreseeable storage costs, as everything is already included for one price.

More than 3000 organisations worldwide, including 115 of the Fortune 500 (23%), have turned to FreeStor technology to address their data management solutions needs. By creating a virtualised software-defined layer that sits on top of disparate storage arrays, FreeStor has allowed customers to avoid vendor lock-in. FalconStor has achieved this by eliminating the downside of outdated licensing models and shifting to a transparent consumption-based subscription-pricing model.

Sunrise Communications AG in Switzerland is a typical FreeStor customer. It is the largest private telecommunications provider in Switzerland and the leading non-incumbent operator in both the mobile and landline retail voice markets, as well as being the third-largest landline Internet provider with IPTV. Sunrise implemented the FreeStor solution to reduce or eliminate bloated software costs and remove vendor lock-in issues.

"Once we implemented FreeStor, we went to a new model where we pay for what we actually use. This pricing model allows us to be more flexible. Hardware is pretty much a commodity for us now. We've taken features from the storage array and put them into the FreeStor virtualisation array, allowing us to be more flexible. That's pretty much the key thing – it's about optimising at the software level with FreeStor has actually saved us a lot of money and will continue to save us a lot of money into the future," said Sandor Orban, Technical Lead Infrastructure Services at Sunrise.

"The whole point of the FreeStor deployment is that we are looking at providing a complete solution," said Orban. "FreeStor helps us to provide infrastructure services that support our business to provide infrastructure services that support our business to provide the highest levels of availability and data security. It allows us to support the business by driving faster and lower-cost launches of new products and services. While the future is always changing, we know that FreeStor will be able to help us further optimise our environment, continuing the trend to consolidate and reduce costs without compromising our customer values."

The main differentiator between FreeStor and other storage solutions from other vendors is that FreeStor enables the management of data heterogeneously from one GUI, regardless of vendor or type, in the cloud or virtual, eliminating the complexity and cost of unmanageable silos and data growth. FreeStor has an Intelligent Abstraction layer that sits on top of multiple storage platforms, meaning there is a common way of managing all the different storage arrays. Other vendors require a different GUI to manage each array as they all have different interfaces. Being heterogeneous allows FreeStor to provide the ultimate cost saving solution, where other vendors can only see into their array. This cross environment capability greatly reduces the amount of time the staff needs to manage the storage infrastructure.

In comparison with other software-defined storage platform vendors, FreeStor offers:

•   Scalability - FreeStor is vastly superior to its competitors when it comes to scalability and can manage up to 128 storage servers in two-node or four-node high-availability configurations. Competitors like Nexenta, DataCore and Maxta are only able to manage around a fifth of this figure.

•   Replication – With FreeStor's snapshot technology, customers benefit from continuous data protection. This is not the case with all SDS providers with DataCore's product not allowing for this.

•   Deduplication – Unlike other SDS platforms, FreeStor deduplicates data, allowing for huge cost savings on storage. This benefits the end users by improving storage utilisation, reducing a storage footprint, providing WAN optimised replication and data movement. This can reduce costs by as much as 95 percent.

Why nominee should win

•   FalconStor's FreeStor reduces costs for customers as it gives them the freedom from storage hardware vendor lock-in

•   FreeStor's ground-breaking Intelligent Abstraction® approach works on a virtualised storage pool abstracted from the underlying physical storage

•   FreeStor increases productivity through a single-pane-of-glass to provision, orchestrate and manage capacity and data services

•   FreeStor improves efficiency through its virtualised storage pool, global deduplication, and WAN optimised replication that reduces operational and infrastructure costs

•   FalconStor also increases agility through common data services being offered across storage infrastructures, regardless of platform, type, or vendor