Nominee: FalconStor

Nomination title: FreeStor Software-Defined Storage Platform

FreeStor is a single software-defined platform which gives IT teams control of their storage across both legacy and virtual environments. Built on four key pillars, FreeStor provides an organisation's network with business continuity, optimisation, migration and protection & disaster recovery (DR).

• What are your product's/solution's key distinguishing features and/or USP?

One of the key benefits of FreeStor is that it offers users a vendor neutral solution as it is agnostic to any hardware, network or protocol – providing flexibility for customers. The software has the capability to sit above disparate vendors like EMC, IBM, HP and Dell storage solutions and in a single view simplify the management of all of those in a unified fashion.

Designed with ease of use in mind, FreeStor offers those managing an organisation's IT visibility of what is happening in the entire storage infrastructure through a single-pane-of-glass, whilst also providing a whole host of other benefits, no matter what storage solutions they are using. This prevents an organisation from suffering from siloed complexity, vendor lock-in and can also provide IT teams with a better understanding of network storage traffic.

Traditionally, organisations can fall into the trap of a vendor offering significant discounts for a lock-in solution. Once the user is signed up with a specific vendor, potentially at a good price, they are then locked-in to this vendor and can end up paying higher prices as moving storage providers can cause a lot of hassle. This pricing model allows users to benefit from consumption-based subscription-pricing model, providing them more flexibility and predictability. FreeStor is also sold via an Opex model, allowing customers to benefit from predictable costs, seeing them pay nothing extra for future enhancements.

FreeStor consists of four pillars designed to enhance the storage process and reduce costs for end users. These are:

• Optimisation - FreeStor's optimisation with deduplication reduces storage costs and increases backup efficiency. It also provides the IT team with greater control over data and the entire data infrastructure. The deduplication of data is key as it can drastically reduce the amount of data being handled, optimising performance and minimising the cost of additional storage resources. Although this process is now widely available in software-defined solutions, FreeStor has the ability to deduplicate across an organisation's entire environment. It can also be introduced to older systems that don't already have deduplication capabilities.

• Protection and Recovery – The term backup has been in existence for a considerable amount of time. However, all to often the recovery of data can take hours or days to recapture.

FreeStor's snapshot technology solves this issue by offering almost instant recovery, providing peace of mind that data is protected and fully recoverable.

• Migration and Data Mobility – FreeStor provides a single platform for both legacy and virtual platforms. The converged services which FreeStor provides lets the user control data movement and supports migration from array to array, clusters, or site to site.

• Business Continuity – From SMBs to large enterprises, business continuity is crucial and mission-critical applications are more and more common in infrastructures. By abstracting from the hardware, FreeStor can distribute the data and make it available at all times, providing minimal downtime and in turn lowering costs and enhancing productivity.

• What tangible impact has your product/solution had on the market and your customers?

FreeStor has shaken-up the landscape of the software defined storage market. It allows customers to avoid vendor lock-in and manage different pieces of hardware, systems and platforms through a single interface. Having this heterogeneous capability has allowed IT teams to make the best decision based on the product, rather than being dictated to by a single vendor. Customers will now have the ability to move to commodity hardware and reduce hardware cost and licensing dramatically. This has been successful for organisations already with customers such as Imptech and Telefonica implementing the software into their systems.

"FreeStor is a very good solution for us," said Luis Urzua, Digital Solutions Manager, Telefonica Empresas, Chile. "FreeStor is easy to use and also very affordable for us and our customers. While we can't compete, at first sight, on price with general cloud providers like Microsoft Azure or Amazon S3, with FreeStor we are able to offer a converged storage ecosystem with a full suite of services. This is how Telefonica can help companies become intelligent enterprises, with collaborative tools that boost the creativity of employees through talent empowerment."

With FreeStor, Imptech's customers across Argentina are finding the innovation they desire. The solution's must-have data services combined onto one intelligent converged platform gives Imptech the technology offering it needed to differentiate itself from its competitors while providing its clients with what they need to gain a competitive edge and helping them reach the next level within their given industries.

"We felt the FreeStor platform could provide our customers with an intelligent and flexible technology layer that enables common, efficient and cost-effective storage services, and centralised management of storage resources across an organisation," said Gagliardi. "Our clients needed a solution that could promote better utilization, reducing overall storage costs, and migrate data seamlessly when the need arises."

• What are the major differentiators between your product/solution and those of your primary competitors?

The key benefit of FreeStor is the freedom which it provides its customers. Although vendors such as EMC, IBM, HP and Dell can offer storage solutions with software implemented, being with one

of these competitors will mean organisations are locked in to that vendor. This can often see an increase in price after an introductory offer has expired and also limits the other providers organisations can work with, meaning organisations have to dance to the vendor's tune. FreeStor allows organisations to mix and match storage solutions as it sits above the abstraction layer and allows them to make hardware decisions freely.

Aside from hardware vendors, FalconStor's FreeStor platform also rivals software-defined storage vendors. The software offers:

•   Scalability - FreeStor is vastly superior to competitors when it comes to scalability and can manage up to 128 storage servers. Competitors such as 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, for example with DataCore's product does not allow 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 for organisations 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

•   Unlike its competitors, FreeStor is highly scalable and can manage up to 128 storage servers

•   FreeStor provides a single management interface for IT teams to analyse their storage.

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

•   FalconStor's Opex model for FreeStor allows customers to benefit from predictable costs, seeing them pay nothing extra for future enhancements