Extending the Benefit of a Server Refresh: Adding Best-in-Class HCI with vSAN

Lee Caswell, VMware Vice President of Products, Storage and Availability - An expert's perspective

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Lee Caswell leads a team driving storage that speeds the customer adoption of new products, partnerships, and integrations. Lee joined VMware in 2016 and has extensive experience in executive leadership within the storage, flash, and virtualization markets.

Lee has a long history of promoting flash adoption as vice president of Marketing at NetApp and vice president of Solution Marketing at Fusion-IO (now SanDisk). Prior to Fusion-IO Lee was a founding member of Pivot3, a company widely considered to be the founder of hyper-converged systems, where he served as the CEO and CMO. Earlier in his career, Lee held marketing leadership positions at Adaptec and SEEQ Technology, a pioneer in non-volatile memory. He started his career at General Electric in Corporate Consulting.

Lee holds a bachelor of arts degree in economics from Carleton College and a master of business administration degree from Dartmouth College. Lee is a New York native and has lived in northern California for many years. He and his wife live in Palo Alto and have two children. In his spare time Lee enjoys cycling, playing guitar, and hiking the local hills.

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Hyper-converged infrastructure (HCI) is already one of the most important initiatives driving the transition to the modern data center. As Grandview Research states, "In the next months 40% of large organizations and 35% of mid-tier organizations intend to shift from traditional architecture to hyper-converged infrastructure." We recently had an opportunity to learn more about a seamless path to HCI with Lee Caswell of VMware.

Caswell explained that many companies are racing to adopt "digital-first" strategies that need to be implemented at lower cost with existing personnel. This seemingly impossible agenda is an ideal fit for HCI because virtualization teams can take on storage management tasks and leverage new server technologies to speed up a company's digital transformation.

In support of HCI, Caswell cited some of the important customer benefits that accrue when scale-out storage is integrated into virtualized servers. Some of the top benefits align perfectly with today's business challenges:

- **Speed IT responsiveness** with converged software-defined technologies in place of separate server, storage, and network architectures
- **Realize operational efficiency** by consolidating storage management with virtual administrators working with a common management view
- **Save up to 60% on acquisition costs** by using x86 industry-standard hardware in place of traditional proprietary storage hardware

As Caswell observed, this list of benefits changes the question from "Should we adopt HCI?" to "How do we get started with HCI?"

Deploying HCI with a server refresh is an emerging "best practice"

There are many HCI options, but not all provide the same level of benefit. As Caswell notes, "A server refresh provides a compelling opportunity to deploy HCI with state-of-the-art technologies such as NVMe flash and low-latency networks that deliver high-performance at a fraction of the cost of legacy infrastructure. The HCI approach also reduces operating costs by consolidating server and storage management skill sets with the virtual administrator."

According to Caswell, there are three compelling reasons for deploying HCI using VMware™ vSAN™ during a server refresh:

1. **Improve "time to solution" with IT mapped to business needs.** HCI allows users to scale quickly and cost-effectively using familiar server building blocks where quick deployment times and simple reconfiguration eliminate the tedious inflexibility of legacy infrastructure. Server-based HCI reduces the cost of reconfiguration and makes it easy to scale as business requirements shift.
2. **Leverage virtualized skills to save operational costs.** By managing storage through the VMware vCenter console that is familiar to 350,000 virtualization administrators, vSAN allows IT teams to adopt a VM-centric management view where storage policies are set, monitored, and changed according to business needs.
3. **Provide an uninterrupted path to future technologies.** vSAN supports the latest applications and development environments including cloud-native application support, Kubernetes container development, and Pivotal Cloud Foundation. The latest hardware is similarly available by virtue of the vSAN ReadyLabs, which tests vSAN software with hardware from over 15 different server providers for every possible workload.

Summary

HCI is a priority for nearly every IT organization because of the imperative to deliver "digital first" strategies that drive competitive advantage. Companies that want to win the fight for customers know they need tools that make them more agile, cost effective, and efficient. HCI delivers on each of these attributes and provides a valuable new tool for the IT arsenal.

Learn more at www.vmware.com/go/hitrefresh