

# EMC – Getting to grips with cloud?

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## Quocirca Comment

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Let's get a few things out in the air first. Yes, EMC has shown amazing arrogance at times. It has also been stunningly wrong at times, for example when it stated that network attached storage (NAS) was just a stepping stone to storage area networks (SANs), and when it said that the only way to go was private cloud, with neither public and hybrid cloud being seen as having a viable future.

Now let's look at EMC today. From discussions that Quocirca has been having with it, this is a new, much improved EMC. Gone is the assumption that everything will be placed on a SAN, gone is the focus on private cloud. To a greater extent, going too is the arrogance that has tended to be perceived by its customers.

On the storage side, EMC is now talking about the need for a hybrid approach, looking at object, file and block data stores that can work in synergy with each other. This involves a mixed approach in technologies being used, with VMAX (Symmetrix), VPLEX, VNX and Isilon being played together as necessary as part of an overall storage solution for an organisation's needs.

When it comes to cloud, EMC now accepts that it changes everything and has overhauled its approach. It can no longer look at an organisation as being somewhere where large databases of formal data can be kept separate from the less formal documents, with only a few of these being put into a more formal storage and archive environment such as that offered by one of EMC's many acquisitions, Documentum.

What is now needed is a highly federated, virtualised storage environment that spans the different types of data and provides the capability to manage the storage pool, the data that resides within it and to be able to analyse and report on what is there in the simplest manner possible.

This is where cloud and big data come together. Quocirca has seen many vendors get "big data"

wrong, believing that all that it means is very large data sets in a SQL database. Big data has to span across all an organisation's data and information – including that which lies outside of its direct control – whether this means data that is part of a relatively constrained environment as part of the value chain of its customers and suppliers, or whether it is public information being pulled in from the public cloud.

The first thing with big data is to get the amount of data that is under the organisation's direct control to the minimum volume possible, so lowering storage volumes and the associated costs. Here, EMC brings two more of its acquisitions to play, in Data Domain and Avamar. These companies specialised in data deduplication, which can lower data volumes by as much as 80 percent.

However, the focus at the moment is still on target-based deduplication (the deduplication of data as it is backed up, rather than source-based, which deduplicates the primary files) – this is an area where EMC has to push harder to enable organisations to gain the real benefits of Data Domain and Avamar technology. Also, EMC has to bring together the two products so as to reduce confusion in the market as to which one is best for what job. EMC also has to broaden the use of Documentum and its archiving solutions in Centera to get more of the ad-hoc data into a position where it can be analysed and reported in a rapid and simple manner. The more EMC can minimise the number of files that are stored outside of its direct control, the less compute power that will be required to bring everything together and organise it on the fly for analysis.

Once the data volumes are controlled, the information needs to be analysed. Here, Greenplum, a 2010 EMC acquisition, provides mixed-data capabilities that can deal with structured and ad-hoc data sources. EMC is offering Greenplum either as straight-forward software, or as pre-configured modular data computing appliances (DCAs).

EMC has also recognised that Hadoop is doing well in the big data arena as an open source solution. Rather than try to beat it and squeeze it out of the market, EMC has decided to embrace Hadoop and provides connectors into any Hadoop implementation so that Greenplum capabilities can be layered upon it.

So, EMC seems to have a pretty good big data argument in place – but what does this mean in cloud terms? EMC's hybrid approach to storage will allow organisations to move to private cloud in a manner where its storage can be effectively virtualised and managed to the organisation's benefit. But, is EMC still missing the real point of hybrid cloud?

EMC used to run a service for some of its customers that was a hosted storage environment called Atmos. Atmos has now been set free and is available to all as a full product, enabling partners to offer cloud-based storage, as well to create a private cloud-based storage platform for organisations that can easily integrate with public storage clouds.

EMC has also decided to create cloud proof points before going to market. The biggest one for it has been itself. EMC created a roadmap of what it believed it needed to do to become a next-generation organisation based around cloud concepts, and has been driving towards a highly virtualised, self-service, elastic, hybrid cloud platform. It is now using this experience both in its direct interactions with customers and also with its partners to help bring them up to speed as rapidly as possible.

For the new EMC things are looking good. It seems to have finally listened to the markets, and has responded rapidly with a more cohesive and comprehensive product set for cloud computing. With much of its message becoming more business-focused, it is showing a wish to move up from the techie levels in how it sells to organisations as well.

The main remaining issue is that its portfolio remains complex, and it is beholden on the sales force and channel to carry out a solution sell rather than a portfolio sell. This may be an issue for much of EMC's existing sales capability – and will have to change rapidly.

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Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first-hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

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