Q&A With Greg Schulz - A Quick Roundup of Data Storage Industry

Greg Schulz

Every day is a new day in the data storage industry as it is always bombarded with new technology flashes, latest updates and various discussions about subject matter i.e. big data, cloud, data tapes etc round the globe. After having realized the importance of expert discussions, **ODSI** recently organized an interview with **Greg Schulz** in which different questions were asked about the prospective role of data tapes and cloud technology in the industry, the latest updates on big data and then the light discussion on overall storage industry form the perspectives of both consumers and vendors.

ABOUT GREG SCHULZ

Author, Blogger, Independent IT advisor and consultant at the Server and StorageIO Group

Publications

1. The Green and Virtual Data Center
2. Cloud and Virtual Data Storage Networking
3. Resilient Storage Networks Enabling Flexible Scalable Data Infrastructures

A Talk on Data Tapes, Big Data, Cloud & Storage Industry with Greg Schulz

W*here do you see* data tapes *in near future?*

Despite all the myth, despite all the hype, despite all the feud, fear, uncertainty and doubt tape is actually alive. It has been declared dead for *ummm* 2 3 plus decades; tape is gonna be around for at least another decade but here's a key thing with it. Its wall is changing; the technology, it's evolving. It continues to be enhanced and the eco system around it; but the reality is its wall is changing, its wall is evolved

I see, which technological advancements in tapes, do you think, could add more to the usability and usefulness in this area?

Well I mean, certainly, there is the general enhancement *in other words the performance, the capacity, pace availability, the compression capability, the worm functionality, the partitioning being able to support things for example with LTFS. All of those helping; all of those are things that help to make tape remain viable but may be open up to more new opportunities*

What is the next and upcoming technological advancement that you think is potent enough to change the industry?'

Well the automatic answer is that everybody would probably run with solid statement flash and software defined but I think it's gonna be those in addition to things such as the solid state hybrid disk drives

How do you see the [acquisition of whiptail by Cisco](#) and making its serious attempt to enter into the data storage industry?

Yeah, [Cisco](#) has been in the data infrastructure space and when you say data infrastructure space that means server storage, networking, hardware, software for quite a long time now in between their partnership with the EMC, the NetApp and the CSS. With whiptail, they are extending the capabilities and more importantly it is, to brought attention to the fact that Cisco has been selling disk drives independent of EMC, independent of NetApp, independent of Hitachi, independent of others. Selling disk drive is a part of their UCS systems since they have shown launch.

All of sudden, at whiptail, people recognized and realized..Hey!! [Cisco is in the space](#); well, so is HP so is IBM, so is Oracle and so is Dell and every other server vendors who sell drive along with their servers

Alright! Seagate gave a statement, 'The industry is ill prepared for the future of big data due to slower inflow of investments' What is your stance, do you think we are not yet able to handle the big data?

Well, there is a challenge with big data that it means different things to different people and to some people big data only mean analytics and only for the data scientist. Ok, great, fine!! But that also means that there are other things called very big data, VBD or big fast data, which includes videos, large objects, backup save sets, all these other things which is for the rest of us. Here a challenge there is, that it's a combination of supporting bigger bandwidth, bigger items but also retaining these things for longer period of time and to start supporting them in new different way. With the big challenge is this, it's time to start using both new as well as existing technologies in new ways as opposed to just simply try to use the latest, greatest technologies in an old way; that's what some of the biggest barriers are.

So then how do you see the future of 'Big Data' and the role of data tapes in it?

Well there again is, you know if we look at the big data; I tend to look at big data in a pragmatic view another word is not exclusive to any one sector for space. There is different aspects to big data and when you look at big data in general then yeah there is a key role for tape because, like it or not, that info still needs to be protected, may be not the particular analysis but the core data that you are running the analysis on; That needs to be protected on different mediums and that's when you start to see tapes used in different way, protecting the master gold copy but then may be keeping that fast quick reference data on a disk on a system working to analyze processes very very quickly

Alright we are now going to our vendors and suppliers questions

As a vendor of storage products in what ways can you reach effectively to your potential customers?

Biggest way, the best way; whether you are the reseller, the integrator; whether you are the channel partner; whether you are the vendor, the OEM, the ODM. Whatever happens to be is, one clearly articulate your product your technology your solution but also stand out, break away from the rest of the pack. All the other vendors, who all tend to tell the same story they are all doing what each other's doing. Start to innovate by telling your story in a new and different way. Start to show people how they can maximize their return on innovation by using existing as well as emerging technology in new ways. Think outside the box; think outside of the boundary as opposed to just using the same place that everybody else is doing.

Alright! What are the important things to consider for consumer of storage products as well as for the suppliers?

Well certainly people will look at cost and cost, like it or not, will always be a key driver. But one of the biggest things that people need to start looking at as well as being communicated and being made aware of is looking beyond the cost for capacity whether it's cost of capacity for [tape](#) *or cost of capacity for* [solid state](#)*. The number one biggest challenge there is that people look at how much am I getting per cost in terms of that capacity, they have to start looking in terms of how much availability can I get, how much durability can I get per cost, how much productivity, how much performance, how can I actually cut, instead of cutting cost, how can I remove cost from doing business by looking at things in a different perspective*

Alright, for SMEs, could you point out some best practices to design storage infrastructure?

Yeah absolutely whether you are an SME, an SMB; whether you are the super large, super small, the common theme here is when you are working on new technology you can take and try to find the use for; turn the equation around, get back to the fundamentals of looking at what's the business issue, what's the business problem, what's the business opportunity, what's your needs, what's your wants? Now how can you align those tools in your tool box, those different technologies, how can you align those with different problems?

Alright we are now going to our cloud questions

Where do you see the potential of cloud technology?

Ohh in terms of cloud whether its cloud computing, cloud storage; whether its azure service; whether its public private community, hybrid, cooperative, we are scratching the surface we are just barely beginning. This doesn't mean that we are nearly around but just that the whole potential for cloud, we are still no where achieving the forth potential, the forth realization where clouds would be and part of that also mean, is realizing that cloud mean more than just cutting cost yeah there are some cost savings there but there can also be some additional costs going into the cloud so you have to start realizing that, with cloud the real upside potential is how can you use them in new innovative ways and if all you're doing is looking at low cost you are probably missing out on some of the biggest benefits, biggest potentials of using clouds

Alright in our primary market UK, 52% of SMEs are not taking cloud technologies on board. Why do you think they are reluctant?

Well simple whether you are an SME, whether you are umm actually the number is varying. One of the things in there is a fact that whether they are adopting or not how much adoption they are doing. Ok, so if you go down to market you would find more people are using some form of cloud but they are varying in degrees. The key thing is [cloud concerns](#)*; people have concerns about cloud those concerns include cost, confidentiality, availability, security, reliability, compliance, all these different things are concerns of people that come up in cloud conversations. So what they have to do is identify what are your concerns around cloud? If you could identify what those concerns are (compliance, cost, confidentiality, security, availability, reliability) all these different things. The first step is to figure out what your concerns are then you can start making some determination of are they real concerns or just lack of education or things that have to be worked around*

Ok our last question is how could you tap onto this opportunity as a tape media vendor?

You know one of the ironic things is that [tape vendors](#) *see and hear about disk people running around telling everybody that tape is dead well that's because, for quite a while, the tape industry has not been communicating they have been rusting on their walls on their success umm enjoying the plateau productivity sort of speak. So part of that is, generate the awareness around tape that is a lot; some other things, come back for example Amazon glacier you have got other services that are popping up there that whether they are tape based or not the raw reality is that many cloud providers somewhere in their infrastructure may in fact have tape for some role. People need to become more and more aware of that is tape will still be around its location that how has it been using is changing and there are new opportunities to use it in new innovative ways*

Alright! Thank you so much Greg.