

MARKET NOTE

BlueXP Strengthens NetApp's Hybrid Multicloud Portfolio with Unified Management of Storage and Data Services

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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: BlueXP Unifies Management of Storage and Data Services to Strengthen NetApp's Hybrid Multicloud Strategy

One of the toughest challenges of hybrid cloud management that organizations are facing is having to use separate management tools for separate environments, leading to greater complexity and added potential security risk. NetApp's BlueXP unified management platform directly addresses this challenge by simplifying storage administration using AIOps and providing a single pane of glass for ransomware monitoring.

Key Takeaways

- Many organizations have data siloed across multiple storage systems, making management more difficult and creating opportunities for cybervulnerability. NetApp's BlueXP serves as the consolidation point for these disparate systems, providing unified management and ransomware detection.
- BlueXP uses telemetry and environment monitoring data gathered by NetApp's Active IQ technology to find potential points of failure and storage inefficiencies across an organization's entire data estate. It then suggests actions to address these problems.
- BlueXP gives a unified view of all potential vulnerabilities in customers' storage repositories, spotting things such as abnormal encryption rates, outdated software versions, volumes that don't have data protection or security features enabled, and sensitive data in repositories with unrestricted or minimally restricted access.
- BlueXP is an essential part of NetApp's portfolio because it serves as both a unification point for its existing portfolio of storage offerings and an integration point for technology partners.

Source: IDC, 2023

IN THIS MARKET NOTE

This IDC Market Note discusses the launch of NetApp BlueXP, its notable features, and IDC's assessment of the product.

Situation Overview

IDC research shows that most organizations take a hybrid multicloud approach to infrastructure and store their data across multiple on-premises and cloud-based systems. One of the most significant challenges organizations face is managing infrastructure and data that span geographically dispersed on premises and cloud systems, each of which may have a unique set of tools and technologies for oversight and administration. Enterprises deploying high-performance analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) applications as part of digital transformation initiatives often face additional demands to simplify and speed access to data. Security is yet another major concern with data spread across multiple locations, given the ever-present risk of data breaches or unauthorized access if proper security measures are not in place.

NetApp's BlueXP Offering

NetApp's BlueXP is a cloud-based control plane designed to address the challenges of managing infrastructure and data services in a hybrid multicloud environment. The software-as-a-service (SaaS)-based BlueXP console can provide a unified point of visibility and management for on premises NetApp AFF, FAS, StorageGRID, and E-Series storage systems and cloud-based Amazon FSx for NetApp ONTAP, Azure NetApp Files, Google Cloud Volumes Services, and Cloud Volumes ONTAP. Customers will continue to have the option to directly manage NetApp products with their respective systems and cloud management tools, but those opting to use BlueXP can get a centralized view of their entire on premises- and cloud-based NetApp environment along with unified access to SaaS-based services that NetApp previously offered in piecemeal fashion, such as Cloud Backup, Cloud Sync, Cloud Tiering, and Cloud Data Sense.

BlueXP aims to simplify the task of managing storage and data and monitoring the health of hybrid multicloud environments through a digital advisor that uses NetApp's telemetry-fueled, AI operations-driven Active IQ technology. A "wellness dashboard" displays a wide range of information, including performance, capacity, configuration settings, and security vulnerabilities. BlueXP can flag potential problems, such as systems approaching capacity or performance limits and gaps in best practices, and suggest administrative actions to fix issues. Aside from preventative measures, the digital advisor can also suggest proactive tasks, such as finding inactive data to move to lower storage tiers and identifying on-premises workload candidates to move to the cloud.

Data protection is another key area of focus in BlueXP, with backup and recovery, replication, and ransomware services. BlueXP backup and recovery can protect a wide range of data types, including NetApp ONTAP data, Kubernetes persistent volumes, applications, databases, and virtual machines, whether on premises or in the cloud. Backups are performed automatically and saved in a private or public object store. BlueXP replication uses NetApp's SnapMirror technology to replicate changed and newly added blocks between ONTAP-based storage systems, without the need for external replication servers. The ransomware dashboard can provide an overview of potential organizational vulnerabilities across on-premises NetApp ONTAP clusters, Cloud Volumes ONTAP deployed in AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud Platform, Amazon FSx for ONTAP, Azure NetApp Files, Amazon S3 and other S3-based object stores, and third-party data sources such as non-NetApp file shares, databases, Oracle

SAP HANA, Microsoft OneDrive, and Google Drive. The ransomware service protects data by identifying volumes that are not protected by snapshot copies or cloud backups, detecting abnormal increases in encrypted files, identifying sensitive data in files with high access permissions, and identifying outdated software versions or disabled security features (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

NetApp BlueXP



Source: NetApp, 2023

The ransomware protection service requires the use of BlueXP classification, a cloud-based service that uses AI, natural language processing, and machine learning to analyze content. Classification can scan and analyze structured and unstructured data stored in NetApp and non-NetApp systems to help customers with compliance, security, storage optimization, and data migration. BlueXP classification identifies personal identifiable information, sensitive data, duplicative data, non-business-related data, and data that is potentially at risk from a security standpoint.

Other BlueXP services include:

- **Digital wallet**, to manage and monitor licenses, entitlements, subscriptions, and contracts associated with BlueXP accounts across on-premises and cloud ONTAP deployments and NetApp's Keystone storage-as-a-service
- **Copy and sync**, to move data between file and object storage (Blue XP copy and sync uses data broker technology to synchronize data between a source and target and, after establishing a sync link, analyzes the source system and divides information into many replication streams for the specified target.)
- **Tiering**, to move infrequently accessed data from on-premises and cloud ONTAP clusters to on-premises or cloud object storage, based on NetApp's FabricPool technology

- **Edge caching**, to consolidate disparate file servers into a globally accessible cloud-based file system that can potentially speed data access for remote locations (BlueXP edge caching can eliminate the need for local data management, backup, security management, and storage at each edge locations.)

IDC'S POINT OF VIEW

IDC's *IT Infrastructure for Storage and Data Management Survey*, completed in January 2023, showed that 57% of the 600 IT and line-of-business respondents take a hybrid multicloud approach to data storage infrastructure, and another 27% follow a hybrid cloud strategy. The survey also showed that 70% deploy or will deploy a unified multicloud management system. The need for a unified management system is especially critical for a storage vendor such as NetApp, which has one of the most comprehensive hybrid multicloud product portfolios in the industry. NetApp's ONTAP enterprise storage operating system is deployed on premises in appliances and as software only in Amazon, Azure, and Google's clouds. NetApp already had a Cloud Manager to administer and monitor its ONTAP storage on premises, AI/ML-driven Active IQ to help optimize and support its infrastructure, and other data services for capabilities such as backup and tiering. Taking steps to unify its many offerings and capabilities through a single BlueXP console is essential to ease the transition to a hybrid multicloud infrastructure for NetApp customers. In addition to BlueXP, NetApp supports a Spot console to manage and monitor applications and compute services. BlueXP and Spot increasingly share a common API layer and set of services, such as tenancy, authentication, and billing, that administrators and developers can use to build automation workflows. NetApp must continue to improve and consolidate its management and monitoring offerings wherever possible.

IDC views NetApp's BlueXP as essential to unify customers' on-premises data with data stored in NetApp ONTAP cloud volumes. Managing on-premises and cloud environments separately from each other and treating them as distinct silos adds complexity to the overall data landscape. The ideal hybrid cloud environment has cloud operations interwoven with an organization's physical architecture.

IDC also sees BlueXP as a foundational platform on which NetApp can further build. NetApp could potentially use BlueXP as the focal point for tighter integration with its entire portfolio, including its Astra management and storage product for Kubernetes-based, cloud-native applications. NetApp supports the Astra Trident open source project for orchestration between Kubernetes and its Persistent Volume framework to provision and manage volumes from systems running any combination of NetApp storage platforms. BlueXP could also serve as an integration point for third parties, allowing technology partners to enhance BlueXP's capabilities with their tools.

To get the most out of NetApp BlueXP, organizations must take into account their size and complexity, the categories of data they will manage, the regulatory requirements they must meet, their data storage needs, their budget, and the technical requirements of their environment.

LEARN MORE

Related Research

- *Worldwide External Enterprise Storage Systems Market Shares, 2022: Market Shows Strong Growth for Second Straight Year, Fueled by All-Flash and Software-Defined Storage* (IDC #US49243723, May 2023)

- *Worldwide Enterprise Infrastructure Workloads Forecast Update, 2022-2026* (IDC #US49911722, December 2022)
- *Worldwide Cloud Cost Transparency Software Market Shares, 2021: Rapid Growth Continues* (IDC #US49543623, November 2022)
- *Yale Unlocks the Transformative Impact of Clinical Data with Disaggregated Architecture and AI* (IDC #US49496322, August 2022)
- *IDC MarketScape: Worldwide Distributed Scale-Out File System 2022 Vendor Assessment* (IDC #US49015322, April 2022)

Synopsis

This IDC Market Note discusses the launch of NetApp BlueXP, its notable features, and IDC's assessment of the product.

"Treating on-premises storage and cloud storage as separate silos needing their own separate management tools complicates hybrid cloud management," says Johnny Yu, research manager, Storage and Computing Infrastructure Software at IDC. "BlueXP is NetApp's bid to remove that complexity while presenting a platform to expand its portfolio and partnerships upon."

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