Cheat Sheet for Improved Hosted and Managed Services

9 Best Practices for Addressing Critical
Business Challenges

> "SolidFire doesn't force us to gamble on our future storage needs. That enables us to maintain our profit margins while scaling quickly to meet customer needs."
>
> — Darrell Hyde, CTO, HOSTING

We spend lots of time at NetApp SolidFire focusing on enabling our service providers to achieve their goals. Consistently over the last four years, service providers Fueled by SolidFire have reported the following business outcomes:

- **Monetizing their storage like never before**
- **Streamlining operations**
- **Winning more customer applications**
- **Reducing risk**

But these service providers have characteristics in common that might be helpful in setting the direction of your services. These are common characteristics or best practices witnessed in hundreds of successful service providers across the globe. Some are storage specific and some are more general in nature in market approach.

1. Performance tiering
  – Disk-based related performance (SATA, SAS, SSD) and rate limiting for service providers that have an actively depreciating storage investment — squeeze every last penny from current investment
  – Granularly controlled and guaranteed performance to each and every workload
    • Protection of all customers from "noisy neighbor syndrome," thus increasing customer satisfaction and reducing churn
    • Specialized protection of highest-value customers by minimizing the potential performance reduction (making the max performance and min performance closer together) on the platform should there be any type of failure

2. Value-based pricing and packaging
  – Service providers need customers to pay as much as possible for their services to maintain margins and return on investment. Yet customers can only pay for the value they receive. Thus, services have to provide clear value with each pricing tier.

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3. Automation
– Any process that is conducted five times per month or more should be automated
– Automation is implemented at the orchestration level

4. Consolidation of platforms
– Moving away from having separate (frequently different technology) platforms for each service — such as private cloud, multi-tenant cloud, VMware-based services, OpenStack services, dedicated hosting, etc.
– Improving margins through streamlined operations, increasing data center revenue per square foot, minimizing (even complete repurposing) expensive storage engineering resources

5. Simplifying management
– Managing infrastructure resources through the orchestration layer instead of each individual component that requires its own set of skills and expertise
– Infrastructure implementation completed in 15 minutes (adding storage by plugging in 4 cables, executing 4 clicks in user interface — or completely automated through orchestration layer)
– Instantaneous load balancing — workload rebalancing automatically performed when system change takes place (resource capacity increase or decrease)
– Elimination of hardware technology refresh

6. Outcome-based messaging
– Messaging to customers about what they can achieve because they have chosen you as their service provider

7. Know your customer
– In order to bring value and outcomes to your customers, you need to understand who they are and what motivates the purchase
– Be a thriving, powerful river of the world (Yangtze, Thames, Danube, Nile, Amazon, Ganges, etc.) not an ocean that is a foot deep

8. Differentiation
– Clear value- and business-based outcome differentiators that are intentionally built into the service
– Tacking on differentiators is often totally transparent to customers and will do more harm than good
– Like a boxer or wrestler, choose your weight class and then be better prepared than anyone to compete there

9. Actively live in the economic supply chain
– Providing customers access to power technology services can be a waste if you you don't show them how to use the tools and make the most of out of their options.
– Pursue your customers' success and achievement

We've witnessed all of these best practices in thriving service providers around the world. These same practices have been studied and synthesized into the Fueled by SolidFire consulting program. We absolutely can help you drive the best return on investment by taking what we have learned and working with you on implementing your very own best practices that deliver real value-based business outcomes to your customers.