# Time for storage providers to deliver on their word

## Enterprise customers increasingly frustrated as storage tech fails to keep up with Big Data demands

Many companies are putting up with substandard levels of service from storage providers, according to a new report by IDG in partnership with Fujitsu.

According to the survey of IT decision makers, half of UK organisations do not believe their current providers have a clear vision and strategy. Of these, 20% are looking for alternative vendors.



# 20%

of UK organisations are looking for alternative vendors.

Surging amounts of data, coupled with ever-changing compliance demands, is placing increasing pressure on storage infrastructure. In a modern storage environment, it is integral that firms can provide fast, secure access to information at a moment's notice.

These growing requirements are creating an urgent need for better solutions - as well as the capabilities to help implement and advise on these.

The growing value of digital information and systems for business requires storage to have the ability to access data quickly when needed. Companies are asking for reliable and dependable infrastructure, but finding the right storage solution - and provider - can be complex and fraught with danger.

Those selling storage often fail to keep up with today's business needs, and this can see them offering solutions lacking in quality and service. This is leaving those looking for reliable and dependable storage bitterly disappointed, the IDG and Fujitsu report found, and many are failing to get the best out of their infrastructure and partners.

The study found that most firms are looking for smarter, more efficient use of data; they are demanding better performance out of their storage. According to the report, 57% of customers are looking for more performance from their next storage investment. Yet many companies feel this is not currently provided by their vendors.

The result is that many firms are locked in contracts with substandard storage suppliers, and the foundations of their businesses are based on sub-optimal solutions.

## Storage drama

The 'bad' storage products offered by many vendors are shallow: on the surface they can appear useful, but in reality they contain multiple unnecessary features.

This is made worse by the fact that those selling storage often hype their products and push solutions heavily without matching them to the individual business. This was evident from the answers to IDG and Fujitsu's study. When asked how they rate the transparency of their current storage provider on the capabilities of the products sold, 25% said this was poor.

Therefore, for companies considering a change of vendor, the landscape can be daunting. This is not least because

COMPUTERWORLD UK

FUJITSU

the search for a new storage provider creates drama. Without the right advice and guidance, companies can face compatibility issues, unexpected licence fees and a lack of scalability. This is on top of the risk added by multiple platforms, a lack of guidance, advice and transparency, unreliable products - and a whole host of other pitfalls.

With amounts of data increasing every day, firms require a consultative approach from their vendors. This should include advice on how to make the most out of storage, as well as insight on current trends.

But storage customers are aware they are not getting enough from their vendors. Many say they are receiving poor service from storage providers, and are worried about the help already received from pre-sales agents (50%) in defining an appropriate solution in the first place.

According to the study, around 40% said the help and advice from current pre-sales is poor. In fact, only 15% rated pre-sales assistance at 5 out of 5. This is indicative of the low levels of service often being offered by those selling storage.

# 15%

only 15% rated
pre-sales assistance at
5 out of 5

## Capability of technology

The marketplace is over-crowded with high-tech, yet gimmicky, storage platforms. Firms need products that can deliver, and technologies that work.

Technical support is absolutely key to the optimal running of complex storage infrastructure. Yet many companies are not happy with the support they have been given by vendors. When asked how they rate the technical support from their current storage provider, around 25% said this was poor. This is true across the board. Worryingly, only 1 in 5 scored the technical support they get from current supplier at 5 out of 5.

# 25%

said the technical support from their current storage provider was poor
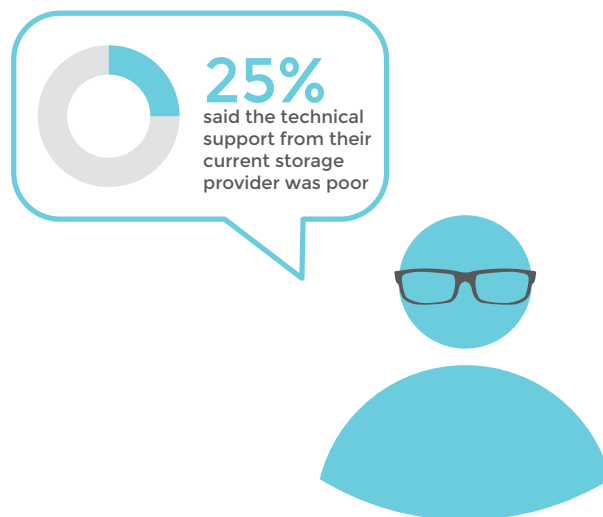
Storage centres on reliability - infrastructure should be able to stay up and running and it must be possible to recover data at a moment's notice. However, only 30% of respondents think their current infrastructure is highly reliable, and a quarter of all respondents said it is poor.

Companies know that good storage is not cheap, but cost effectiveness is also cited as an issue for many heads of IT. The report discovered major concerns among today's IT decision makers around improvements to the cost effectiveness of their storage infrastructures (70%).

When asked how they rate the cost effectiveness of their current storage infrastructure, 50% felt that it was not performing. Worryingly, only 14% said theirs was highly cost effective.

Not surprisingly, organisations want change. The report found that organisations are clear about the business outcomes they want from their next storage investment. Firms questioned in the survey said new procurement will be driven by better performance, efficiency and improved back-up and recovery.

*New procurement will be driven by better performance, efficiency and improved back-up and recovery.*

It is therefore clear that companies are motivated to do something about poor storage. But at the same time, making the transition is not easy: infrastructure budgets are flat and the technology landscape is transforming fundamentally. As a result, many firms are unhappy with their storage providers, but are not changing due to the perceived hassle and risk.

## Enter the future: vision and strategy of the vendors

In order to be fully equipped with a service that can deal with the challenges of today and tomorrow, it is essential that companies make the change soon.

The initial search is often daunting. When customers plan to buy storage or change their solution, they find that providers' strategies are not clear - and this is adding to confusion. When asked what their interpretation was of their current storage provider's technology strategy, more than 1 in 4 said they were yet to hear from the vendor about how they might move to a 'future vision'.

These providers are not doing enough. A consultative approach is needed when buying storage and changing technology, but some vendors are not offering sufficient insight into storage trends or changes in the market. The survey asked: "Where do you find most of your information on storage trends?" Almost 1 in 5 said this comes from other vendors looking for their business. Meanwhile, less than half said they often get information from their current vendor.
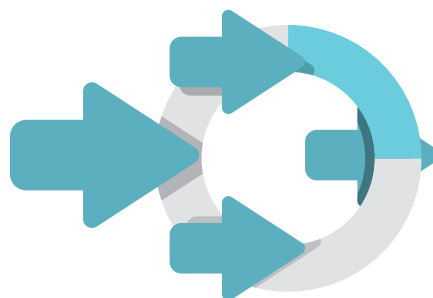
**1 in 4** said they were yet to hear from the vendor about how they might move to a **'future vision'.**

As a result, relationships with current storage providers are often poor. Of the respondents, 1 in 10 had been forced to buy more capacity than they needed in order to keep up with future requirements. Additionally, 1 in 6 had, after installation, experienced compatibility issues with a new solution. Meanwhile, 1 in 10 were faced with nasty cost surprises after "being sold the dream".

So it is clear that organisations are putting up with poor service from their current vendors. Storage providers often do not sufficiently consider their clients' needs; instead they push unnecessary products onto customers. When questioned, almost 1 in 5 companies felt they had the vendor's latest products pushed on them. Worse still, over 1 in 4 said their relationship was based on the vendor taking advantage.

Firms need storage that is built around their needs, not those of their vendors. However, most feel they have been left in the lurch by the companies they were paying to help them. Almost 1 in 10 had not been able to make use of a functionality that was recommended and sold to them. Even more worryingly, 1 in 10 companies felt they were being milked to fund product development.

This distrust is having a direct impact on firms' relationships with storage vendors. When asked about their relationship with their current storage provider, over 40% of customers did not feel their technology and business requirements were understood. Unfortunately, 15% said they were locked into their vendor relationship.



## 15%
said they were locked into their vendor relationship
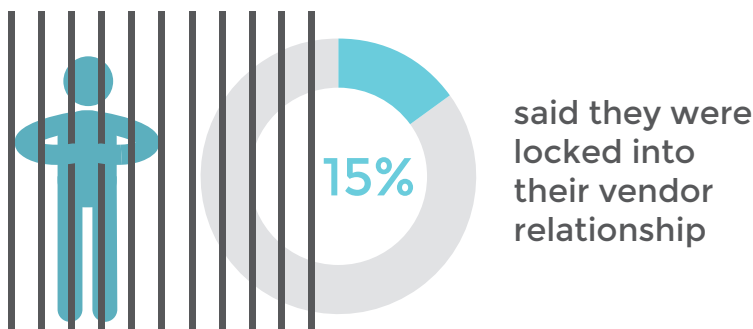
Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly, 1 in 10 companies said they know there are better vendors out there and are looking to change.

## Addressing issues head-on

Finding and maintaining the right storage solution is a headache for many organisations and it is difficult to know who to trust. However, there are providers that offer 'good' storage: reliable, dependable and without danger.

Data is at the heart of every agile business - and companies such as Fujitsu realise this. It is possible to procure a solution that fits business needs - offering high performance, cost-effective data management solutions.

Companies such as Fujitsu offer a consultative approach, with the ability to arrive at the type of storage solution that's right for the individual company. This entails openness, honesty and transparency in order to deliver the right solution.

With storage requirements increasing, combined with every business' need to get more value from data, it is imperative that organisations break the status quo and make all-important changes.

*The path to good storage can be smooth, care and hassle-free, and once it is implemented, the experience will continue to remain so.*

The path to good storage can be smooth, care and hassle-free, and once it is implemented, the experience will continue to remain so. As part of this transition, scalability is key in order to continue to meet ever-increasing storage demands.

It is clear that simple, safe and scalable storage is attainable. Fujitsu's storage in partnership with Intel® is a game-changing solution that finally puts an end to complexity, extra cost and the restrictive nature of other storage platforms.

This translates to better cost-efficiency and performance, keeping data secure and highly available at a lower cost of growth. It is time to think and act differently, taking advantage of a smarter, better storage provider. ○