

# CHANNEL

MIDDLE EAST

ing IT solutions for the Middle East

An ITP Media Group Publication

www.itp.net  
JUNE 2018  
Vol. 16  
Issue. 06

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# MASTERING THE ART OF BACKING UP

Good data protection management means having effective processes and methodologies in place to maintain data integrity. But how is the backup and data protection market shaping up in the region?

*By MANDA BANDA*

**T** organisations in the region are currently faced with regulatory upheavals including the fast approaching deadline for the enforcement of general data protection regulation (GDPR); and dramatic changes in business requirements, which are driving businesses to a point that demands a more proactive approach to data management and protection.

With GDPR coming into effect from May 25th, both large and small businesses across all regions and all industries, are required to toughen up the protection of customer's personal data for EU citizens from 28-member states. This will redefine the rules of data and storage management. Businesses need to have a better understanding of their data environ-

ments to evaluate what data is subject to the GDPR regulations.

A report by Ponemon Institute reveals that the average total cost of a data breach to organisations in the Middle East has gone up by 20% from \$4.12 million in 2016, to \$4.94 million in 2017. Such incidents can have a huge impact on organisations hence, enterprises need holistic data security strategies and solutions to avert, contain, and perform damage control.

Solutions such as endpoint security and data backup and recovery can cut down costs and safeguard business continuity. However, it is important to note that the Middle East also has the highest spend on data breach response, approximately \$1.43 million per incident.

Anand Chakravarthi, area vice president, Pivot3, said the backup and data recovery market is evolving in Middle East as the region is undergoing evolution and modernisation in the data centre. The adoption of hyper-converged infrastructure (HCI) is driving customers to think about how they consume IT and how they design their data centres to be flexible and deliver greater business agility. "Take our customer Emirates Steel for example, they consolidated and standardised their backups on Pivot3," he said.

Chakravarthi said the MEA market is truly embracing the 3-2-1 rule of data protection and using a combination of on premises and cloud technologies to subscribe to this backup best practice. "It is this adoption that led

to Pivot3 collaborating closely with Veeam on their CloudConnect programme and also one of the key drivers behind our recently released Amazon Web Services (AWS) Edition of Pivot3, which gives customers the ability to use their backup software of choice, with highly protected on-site storage and then replicate that data to AWS,” he said.

Graham Porter, Middle East channel manager at Veeam Software, said many organisations in the Middle East are still struggling to manage the ever growing amounts of backup data and are unable to meet backup service level agreements (SLAs) and in severe cases don’t actually have any guarantee that the backup technologies that they have invested in can provide their business a successful restore for mission critical applications which can result in costly business downtime.

Porter said it is a fact that legacy backup and recovery solutions are not enough to meet the demands of an always-on enterprise. “Veeam recognises the new challenges companies across the globe face in enabling a business that must operate 24 by 7 and 365 days,” he said. “To address this, Veeam has pioneered a new market of ‘availability’ technologies by helping organisations meet recovery time and point objectives (RTPO) of less than 15 minutes for all applications and data, through a fundamentally new kind of solution.”

According to Porter, Veeam sees acceleration of cloud adoption and growing customer expectations across the IT industry as the biggest catalysts for significant change. We believe the following four key trends are emerging in the Middle East in the data protection, backup and recovery space and they include criticality of availability, legacy applications stifling innovation, digital transformation and the emergence of disaster recovery-as-a-service.

Savitha Bhaskar, COO, Condo Protego, said as more Middle East organisations undergo digital transformation, Middle East CIOs are moving from a mindset of merely backing up data, to holistic business application and data management across different platforms, including data protection, data availability and data security.

Bhaskar said backup and disaster recovery is not vendor-driven, but rather compliance and regulation-driven. “In the next 12 to 24 months, as the Internet of things (IoT) and



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**ANAND CHAKRAVARTHI, AREA VICE PRESIDENT, PIVOT3**



smart cities generate more data, Middle East organisations will need backup and recovery platforms that can backup historical and future workloads that may not even exist yet,” she said.

Bhaskar added that Middle East channel partners should select backup and data protection based on the products’ pedigree, because changing backup systems can be complicated, time-consuming, and expensive.

“Cloud-based backup is no different than on-premise backup. As more Middle East organisations run cloud applications, they need solutions that can backup data across on-premise and multiple clouds,” she noted.

Rajesh Abraham, director, Product Development, eHosting DataFort said converged data protection is on the rise with the need to consolidate data recovery capabilities into a single, highly scalable hybrid platform, which also leads to increased efficiencies.

Abraham said businesses are increasingly turning to cloud-based backup and protection



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**GRAHAM PORTER, MIDDLE EAST CHANNEL MANAGER, VEEAM SOFTWARE**



services. “With more and more CIOs migrating their data to the cloud, there is a need to protect this data as well,” he said. “As companies adapt more into-cloud technologies and using the same for protecting their data, a hybrid model is going to dominate the market for several years from now.”

With modern data backup trends continuing to shape the data management and protection space, new challenges are also emerging for solution providers plying their trade and expertise in this sector.

Fadi Kanafani, regional director, Middle East and Africa (MEA), NetApp, said organisations in the region continue to face unique challenges as they navigate different aspects of the digital transformation. Kanafani said to help businesses address these challenges effectively, NetApp offers solutions that enable channel partners to build whitebox services. “Our APIs integrate these solutions with different clouds, including the big hyperscalers, giving customers the full choice of technology for a given use case such as backup,” he said. “Cloud ONTAP in AWS and Microsoft Azure together with



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SAVITHA BHASKAR, COO, CONDO PROTEGO

OnCommand Cloud Manager are examples. Our partnerships with Veeam and Commvault enable us to provide competitive object storage solutions to help manage even larger media repositories.”

Bill Andrews, CEO and president, ExaGrid added that service providers need just-in-time backup and just-in-time restores/VM boots, which means they need backup applications and backup storage that can respond to these more stringent demands. “If you have longer-term retention, standard disk is too expensive,” he said. However, most data deduplication appliances only store deduplicated data that needs to be rehydrated with each restore request. This takes too long and does not meet the SLAs.

Therefore, added Andrews, a new generation of backup storage appliances with data deduplication is becoming quite popular due in part to an integrated ‘landing zone’. According to Andrews, the landing zone keeps the most recent backup in its native, non-duplicated form so that the virtual machine (VM) can boot in seconds to single-digit minutes. “These solutions also use a

scale-out architecture that allows the backup window to stay fixed in length even as data grows,” he said. “This new approach is called hyper-converged secondary storage (HCSS) for backup with data deduplication. ExaGrid is the first to market in this new category.”

Manikandan Thangaraj, director of product management, ManageEngine, said in the Middle East, on-premises backup methods are the primary source of data protection. Thangaraj added that disks and tapes are the preferred backup storage method as many organisations are still skeptical about storing all their information in the cloud. “Numerous interactions with our clients at industry expos have illustrated the lack of trust on cloud-based applications and the need for better security and accountability for cloud-based solutions as the reason to prefer on-premises backup solutions over cloud,” Thangaraj noted.

Condo Protego’s Bhaskar said one major challenge is copy data, with one industry report showing that 82% of organisations have at least 10 copies of every piece of data, leading to a \$50bn issue in 2018. “Enterprise



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BILL ANDREWS, CEO AND PRESIDENT, EXAGRID



“A hybrid approach in the physical and virtual environment along with cloud-based backup and recovery options will sure give the CIO and other C-level executives enough options. Based on increased malware and targeted attacks, encryption to avoid data theft and orchestration is one of the cost-effective options.”

VIJAY KUMAR, SOLUTIONS DIRECTOR, MINDWARE

copy data management solutions consolidate data, streamline operations, and automate compliance,” she said.

As solution providers are speaking more to the business line executives and other C-level managers on which backup and data protection strategy it’s vital that they demonstrate the benefits to business.

Vijay Kumar, solutions director, Mindware, said it is important that solution providers pitch easy to manage solutions, all-in-one and end-to-end management.

Kumar said a hybrid approach in the physical and virtual environment along with cloud-based backup and recovery options will sure give the CIO and other C-level executives enough options. “Based on increased malware and targeted attacks, encryption to avoid data theft and orchestration is one of the cost-effective options,” he said.

According to Kumar, hyper converged infrastructure (HCI) has benefits compared



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**JITHIN VARGHESE, SENIOR SOLUTION ARCHITECT, VAD TECHNOLOGIES**

to the traditional approach towards backup. “HCI removes compatibility and multi-vendor complexity while backing up virtual machines running on multi-OS levels,” he said. “Multi-tenancy can be a challenge for backing up and recovery in times of disaster with bare metal recovery coming into play.

He said while there is little question that the public cloud can greatly improve an organisation’s disaster recovery capabilities, data protection in the cloud is not right for all use cases. “Converged data protection products, tend to work well for organisations that need to extend data protection in the cloud,” he added. “However, there are some challenges to using converged data protection in the cloud.”

Jithin Varghese, senior solution architect, VAD Technologies, said the reason for backup is to ensure data protection and business continuity. Varghese said organisations need a solution which supports their business and keeps their information alive in case of a disaster. “A solution they can trust on, which is certified with important applications like SAP, which is reliable and can deliver a granular disaster recovery when necessary will

surely appeal to customers,” he said.

Varghese said it is a must to understand the customers’ needs and proactively advise them on preventative measures for data protection and business continuity in order to provide a reliable and available data protection solution, which can cover a wide range of complex customer environments.

Bhaskar said with the Middle East channel partner scene dominated by generalists, solutions providers need to transform their business models from merely selling solutions to being value-added partners. “Condo Protego, with one of the Gulf’s largest backup and recovery market shares, is seeing strong demand and success in implementing industry-leading Veritas and Dell EMC data protection solutions,” she said.

Availability is king, and it’s all about service. Having the ability to rapidly respond to customer demands, especially in high pressure scenarios is vital for solution providers.



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**MANIKANDAN THANGARAJ, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT MANAGEMENT, MANAGEENGINE**



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**RAJESH ABRAHAM, DIRECTOR, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, EHOSTING DATAFORT**

Chakravarthi added that a flexible infrastructure is also key, and modularity helps this greatly. “That’s why Pivot3 has so many excellent managed services provide (MSP) partners around the world,” he enthused.

Chakravarthi pointed out that that with Amazon building their regional data centre in 2019, that will drive a new wave of growth in the backup and data recovery market in the Middle East and Pivot3 is going to be there with a ready to go service for the MSPs in the region. Aside from that, Chakravarthi said the continued modernisation of the data centre and the continued shift to a 24 by 7 business market will make data availability even more important than it already is.

Veeam’s Porter agreed with Chakravarthi on data availability and noted that the Middle East is way behind on cloud adoption, with the only real success here being the adoption of Microsoft Office 365. “However, I can see huge investments in cloud in the Middle East from Microsoft, Amazon, Alibaba, Oracle and many others,” he said. “These companies will allow partners to resell their services and package Veeam’s data management products alongside them.” ■