



Education

# Writing Storage RFPs in 2011

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- The data storage industry has changed dramatically over the past few years. The traditional Request for Proposal (RFP) does not address these changes or the challenges faced by IT organizations. Therefore, a new way of defining storage requirements to leverage this evolving technology is needed.
- This tutorial defines the “must-have” criteria that should be included in any data storage RFP in the current era. Performance, scalability, and resiliency are given; but new challenges will arise around power consumption, space requirements, and overall cost containment. In addition, accommodations for developing technologies such as server virtualization and Green IT must be designed into the RFP. Attendees of this session will receive an RFP template designed specifically to take advantage of current storage and IT technologies.

## ➤ Consolidation

- ◆ Many servers to one... but what about:
  - › Paths
  - › Cache
  - › Disk drives
- ◆ Creation of bottlenecks
- ◆ Need a storage system that can handle virtualized environment

- Storage system needs for server virtualization
  - ◆ Move data – when workload moves
    - › Migration feature needed
    - › WWN or IP address assumption to make seamless
    - › Integration with vMotion, Live Migration, StorageLink
  - ◆ I/O performance
    - › Bandwidth (higher data rate paths) and aggregate
    - › IOPs
    - › Wide-striping – more disks active

- Virtual OS integration with storage subsystem
  - ◆ VMware VASA, VAAI, SRM
  - ◆ Microsoft System Center,
  - ◆ Citrix Essentials
- Data Protection Integration
  - ◆ VMware VADP, Symantec OST
- Virtual Desktop (VDI)
  - ◆ Initial storage deployments commonly undersized
  - ◆ Cost of storage *per user*
  - ◆ Need to know capacity, I/Os, etc. on a *per user* basis
  - ◆ Advanced functionality highly desirable

- ◆ Caching
  - › Read and write data
  - › Managed cache and pinning
- ◆ Tiering – SSDs and disks
- ◆ High Performance
- ◆ Automated provisioning
- ◆ Deduplication

- What problem(s) are you trying to solve?
  
- RFI, RFP, or RFQ?
  
- Weighting
  - ◆ What's most important?
  - ◆ What's least important?
  - ◆ What's in-between?
  
- Who will you have to sell the solution to?
  - ◆ CxO
  - ◆ Business Units
  - ◆ Others within IT

- Get as much decision-point data as possible at the beginning of a project (rather than at the end)
- Be aware of all project phases up front so that you can gather data for each phase *during* the RFP process
- Ask succinct questions that discourage RFP marketing rhetoric
- You don't get what you don't ask for

## Do

- ◆ Be detailed and specific
- ◆ Be as descriptive of the IT environment and the business need as is prudent in the RFP
- ◆ Know the relevant standards and ask for them
- ◆ Put yourself in the vendor's shoes (Ask a confusing question, get a confusing answer)
- ◆ Give vendors a reasonable time to respond

## Don't

- ◆ Create a “vendor bias” impression

# Important Questions to Ask

- Can we run a test environment?
- Can we get product documentation before we buy?
- Can we get a product road map?

# Preparing for Negotiation

- **Bundled solution or individual components?**
  - ◆ Pro – bundles have a flat rate giving you a fixed cost
  - ◆ Con – you might end up paying more if bundled
- **Get a line-item cost for everything**
  - ◆ Basic modules and add-ons
  - ◆ Upgrades (even if you don't need them right now)
  - ◆ Maintenance and support
  - ◆ Training
  - ◆ Implementation services
- **Don't be afraid to ask for creative financing options**
  - ◆ Leasing
  - ◆ Deferred payments

- How much help can the vendor provide during the internal selling process?
  - ◆ Procurement should be a partnership
- What is the vendor's problem resolution process?
  - ◆ Service and support capability
  - ◆ Problem escalation procedure
- Will the RFP response give you:
  - ◆ The ammunition you may need to defend yourself or your group if (when) challenged?

## ➤ SNIA Green Storage Initiative:

- ◆ Advanced RAID
- ◆ Delta Snapshots (read-only and write-enabled)
- ◆ Data Deduplication
- ◆ Data Compression
- ◆ Thin Provisioning

# What is SMI-S and Why Should You Want It?

- Storage Management Initiative Specification
- Based on pre-existing open standard
  - ◆ DMTF Common Information Model (CIM)
  - ◆ Wealth of information available from SNIA and vendors
- Reduce management complexity
- Increase flexibility
- Mitigate risk of vendor “lock-in”
- Reduce cost

# What is CTP and Why Should You Want It?

- **CTP = Conformance Test Program**
  - ◆ Test SMI-S implementations to specific version of the SMI-Specification
- **SMI-S version specific**
  - ◆ Currently at version 1.4
  - ◆ Increased features and Test Reports with each newer version
- **Reduces Management Cost**
- **Require the latest available version on your RFP**
- **Conforming Implementations can be found on the SNIA web site**

- Virtualization now driving storage decisions
- Vendors differentiating on the basis of advanced functionality
- Your goal: Differentiated responses to your RFP

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