



HOSTING

Innovation in Digital Marketing

and What that Means for Data Storage

Data storage requirements have grown at an exponential rate. **SYRUS MOKHTARI** weighs up some of the available solutions

As we move into the age of web 3.0, the scale of data usage will be unlike anything digital teams have had to contend with before. The debate about data storage is at the forefront of strategic thinking within all digital teams. Or at least it should be.

With greater use of rich media format banners, videos, interactive collateral and a growing expectation by consumers that an online advert 'does' something, the need for data storage and bandwidth has grown at an exponential rate.

→ **THE LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING - FAST**
With the internet evolving from an information portal to an entertainment portal, video, sound files and user-generated content are particularly prevalent. All of this requires far more data capacity than was previously available to the average digital agency. And as larger players in advertising and marketing start following the trend - and more importantly the budget - the need for this will only increase.

All of this is illustrated by the fact that online advertising enjoyed double-digit year-on-year growth in the first half of 2011, fuelled by a surge in online video advertising and new ad formats.

The bi-annual report from the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) and PricewaterhouseCoopers revealed that UK brands had boosted their online spending by 13.5 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the first six months of 2011 to £2.26bn, a 27 per cent share of the ad market.

→ TECHNICAL PRESSURE MEANS A TRADE-OFF

With this explosion in data comes the requirement for digital marketing companies to be able to uplift data performance while preventing costs spiraling out of control.

Over the past five years storage costs have soared to more than 40 per cent of the IT budget and data growth is only accelerating. Fibre Channel and iSCSI (internet small computer systems interface) storage systems are not delivering price-performance and agility at the storage layer required to keep up with the new, virtualised computing layer.

Organisations are forced to make trade-offs between price performance and complexity options, based on their application requirements.

According to a recent report by the IDC, about 70 per cent of the digital universe is created by individuals, although companies are responsible for the security, privacy, reliability and compliance of 85 per cent of that data. Less than 5 per cent of the digital universe is from data centre servers, and only 35 per cent is drawn from the enterprise overall.

Creation of information is accelerating at breakneck pace, and if organisations want the benefits of information they'll need effective storage.

→ FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR GROWTH IN DATA

Chief factors responsible for the growth in data include burgeoning internet access in emerging countries, increasing

numbers of data centers supporting cloud computing and the rise in social networks, the IDC study found.

The impact will be extensive, ranging from the need to boost information governance to improving data security.

However, David Nelson, Operations & IT Director of Unanimis states that, "ROI is the benchmark which drives other factors and in terms of data storage, ROI is delivered by performance and scalability."

Chris Humphries, Managing Director of AdWorld IT concurs. "Performance and



Dan De Sybel
Director of IT and Operations
Infectious Media

"Cloud providers give ultimate flexibility"



Syrus Mokhtari
Sales Director & Co-Founder
The Blueprint IT

scalability will always be key, as if you do not have this no one will invest in you and you will have no return."

Scalability is the priority for Dan de Sybel, Director of IT & Operations at Infectious Media, as their data collection requirements have grown over 400 per cent since they started the business two years ago. "We already have a platform that provides us with great performance allowing us to derive insight from the data," he says. "However, ROI is much more difficult to ascertain as there is simply so much that can be done with the data we haven't even scratched the surface of the potential. By using a suitable cloud provider and having a sensible retention/backup policy, exponentially increasing data can be managed effectively."

→ THE CLOUD AND ITS ADVOCATES

The cloud has become a universal data storage phrase with Apple launching its own cloud services to consumers. Most of us now understand what it means to have your data stored on a third party server system. With global access, round the clock security and admin support, it is quickly becoming an accepted practice within data that you don't have to build it

yourself when someone has already done it bigger and better and is actively offering you a share in it.

According to Planning Director Mike Teasdale, Harvest Digital have outsourced all their data storage, backup, email and file storage to the cloud. Partly, he says, "this is because our clients demand security and redundancy for data, but actually the main driver for this is the ability to scale very quickly."

But Damien Healy, Group Head of Technology at Havas, has reservations. "For ourselves and established vendors such as Audience Science who have large, known baseline volumes, the cloud hasn't been as compelling across cost and control measures."

De Sybel sees it differently for his organisation, however. "We outsource to a cloud provider, although we are vetting partners all the time. Cloud providers give ultimate flexibility and low cost for deploying enterprise-level architecture without having to spend large amounts of capex on equipment, rack space and invest in teams of system admins."

David Nelson concurs that cloud is the answer, especially in terms of "availability, scalability and performance."

→ A WAY THAT CAN MEET ALL OUR NEEDS

Coraid is redefining the fundamental economics of storage with Ethernet SAN solutions that provide enterprises of all sizes with flexible, scale-out, high-performance storage.

Using innovative software with commodity, industry standard hardware and Ethernet, Coraid EtherDrive storage arrays enable a scale-out Ethernet SAN architecture that is ideally suited to dynamic high performance computing, video, virtualization and cloud environments.

The future has to be about cross-channel linkage of data. True, data-driven, cross-channel marketing aimed at consistent target segments and customers. "Establishing valuable links between offline, online data and cross platform synchronisation enabling multiscreen, multi environment delivery is the future," says David Nelson.

He added that this will "depend greatly upon EU legislation of course, but that point aside digital marketers will only be more data-hungry in the future."

Teasdale spoke of the continuing digitisation of traditionally offline media, which means "there are more and more potential data points to capture and analyse. We would see each and every banner impression as effectively a data transfer event - and we buy billions of ad impressions for our clients each month.

He continued that within digital display "the rise of demand-side platforms has made it easier for agencies to act as proxy ad networks. We need to derive actionable insight from data and we also need to deploy it in real-time auctions, which is going to be massively challenging for many agencies."

→ TIME TO GET SERIOUS

There has been a steady march of data capacity demands on digital marketing companies and scalability, performance and ROI are proving to be key to success, but difficult to achieve using traditional methods of data storage and control.

There is a move to increased virtualisation with the cost of upgrading to faster traditional storage systems to handle virtualised servers which can negate a large portion of the savings that were supposed to be enabled by that very virtualisation in the first place.

With storage being a gateway to the future of advertising, creativity and expansion of an industry that is growing at an exponential rate, is it really something agencies can do in-house, or is it time to get serious about data? When you start looking at the scalability versus cost control argument, then platforms like Coraid seem to be able to address the major challenge that traditional storage implementations simply cannot. ■

To find out more about how *The Blueprint IT* can help with your Cloud and Data Storage, simply contact **Syrus Mokhtari** at *The Blueprint IT*:

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