

SearchITChannel.com

Converged management, not infrastructure, holds appeal

The push toward converged data centers by Hewlett-Packard and Cisco Systems at the vendors' respective partner conferences last year is finding limited support among forward-thinking mid-sized businesses. But that doesn't mean those businesses are willing to take an all-in-one, single-vendor approach, according to data center VARs.

More channel resources on converged data center hardware

[Cisco stresses 'partner-centric' model in converged data center push](#)

[VAR business opportunities for 2011: What to focus on](#)

[HP data center push targets Cisco](#)

"In a data center, there are so many things going on. There are so many parts even within one rack," said Michael Burgess, director of presales data engineering for voice and data integrator [Carousel Industries](#) of North American Inc., in Exeter, R.I. "When you get into the argument of single vendor versus best-of-breed, you have to have best-of-breed. ... It's tough to say you can build everything; it's a little arrogant."

That hasn't stopped HP and Cisco from making convergence a strong part of their respective data center strategies. Cisco's approach hinges on its Unified Computing System (UCS) portfolio, along with close alliances with VMware and EMC. HP, meanwhile, is pushing the virtues of its end-to-end offerings made possible by a series of high-profile acquisitions, including 3Com and 3Par.

Guy Baroan, president of SMB solution provider [Baroan Technologies](#), in Elmwood Park, N.J., said HP's approach has traction among some of his mid-sized business customers. One is a local medical practice that needed to invest in infrastructure for storing and managing large digital images. In this instance, the price point of HP's converged solution made more sense than the \$100,000 that the company might have had to spend on separate technologies.

"It gave them the proper entry point," Baroan said. "It really gives them the capability of adding performance at will."

Solution providers say the data center convergence discussion is closely aligned with the explosion of data center virtualization projects over the past 12 to 18 months. Those projects, in turn, created a clear need for a converged management view for the data center. The view consolidates data and policies from the various technologies, including application servers, security appliances, networking switches and routers, and storage devices, they said.

"Converged data center is not just about 'merging it all into one box', if you will," said Valeh Nazemoff, vice president of [Acolyst](#), a solution provider in Stafford, Va. "It is a shift in the way data centers are run. In a large enterprise client, you have separate organizations and departments handling data centers, another separate one handling and managing network storage, etc. What now? This will require some shift and culture change. Customers will watch how the market will go, some larger organizations would like to map out the architecture and design before purchasing. Therefore, I would assume that based on what is happening today, you are not going to see a major shift for about another couple of years."

Moving from tech supplier to partner

Bruce Geier, founder, president and CEO of San Diego-based systems integrator [Technology Integration Group](#) (TIG), said the converged data center mindset has allowed his team to forge closer relationships with midsized businesses that take a long-term strategic view. His team created a service called TIGER (which stands for Technology Integration Group Enterprise Roadmap) to address the corresponding philosophical shift. “You have to earn the trust of the customer in order to do this,” said Geier. “You will work alongside them. You are not just a vendor to them; you are a partner to them.”

The biggest challenge for TIG has been to ensure that its own technical people can address multi-discipline concerns. It is difficult, Geier admitted, to find someone who can deal with design problems for both storage and networking, as an example.

“They might start with virtualization. You need them to go beyond that and have a desire not just to be the best with any type of enterprise device, but to understand the implications of the different technologies,” he said.

About the expert

Heather Clancy is an award-winning business journalist in the New York area with more than 20 years experience. Her articles have appeared in Entrepreneur, Fortune Small Business, the International Herald Tribune and The New York Times. Clancy was previously editor at Computer Reseller News, a B2B trade publication covering news and trends about the high-tech channel.

Let us know what you think about the story; email Barbara Darrow, Senior News Director at bdarrow@techtarget.com, or [follow us on twitter](#).

All Rights Reserved, [Copyright 2006 - 2011](#), TechTarget | [Read our Privacy Statement](#)