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Innovative Solutions to Data Storage Challenges
Storage Companies to Watch in 2018

Stratecast Analysis by
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Companies to Watch

Storage challenges cover a gamut of dimensions, and it is impossible for a single solution to address them all. Vendors are tackling the challenges from various perspectives: hardware and software; premises and cloud; enterprise and service provider. In this section, Stratecast looks at storage providers that stand out for their innovative solutions and growth potential.

Violin Systems: Modernizing the All Flash Array

One company on this list is not new to market. Flash storage pioneer Violin Memory has emerged from a 2016 bankruptcy with a new name (Violin Systems); a new owner (a Soros-run investment firm); a fresh leadership team (including experienced turnaround expert Ebrahim Abbasi as CEO); and reinvented products. In doing so, the company is returning to the roots that made it the market leader in all-flash arrays five years ago: innovative technology.

The company originally made its mark with market-leading hardware-based all-flash array storage systems—only to lose ground as the market shifted to software-based controls and features. Today, the new Violin Systems is turning its culture of innovation toward software development, particularly with the Concerto OS 7 data services platform that supports advanced functionality for data scaling, cloud data tiering, data protection, data reduction, and business continuity. The Violin Symphony management system provides granular visibility and insight into the Violin Flash Storage Platform and Violin All Flash Arrays.

Violin's primary market appeal—then and now—is its technology, and particularly the impressive results delivered by its proprietary systems. The company's latest generation of high performance products are designed to deliver ultra-low latency and high IOPS, high capacity, and high availability. Violin says its high-performance system FSP 7650 sustains rates of 2 million IOPS with latency of less than 1 millisecond—appropriate for analytics and data warehousing. For high-availability workloads, the FSP 7700 assures Recovery Point Objectives and Recovery Time Objectives of zero; that is, zero downtime and zero data loss. The FSP 7450 supports almost 1PB of raw storage in a small footprint (3RU form factor), and achieves an average data reduction ratio of 6:1.

The re-emerged company's go-to-market strategy includes a focus on five use cases and six vertical industries, as follows:

- **Use cases**: Database acceleration, big data analytics, real-time online transaction processing, virtual desktop infrastructure, and inventory management

- **Industries**: Insurance, healthcare, technology, retail, financial services, telecommunications

Flexible financing and pay-as-you-grow options enable enterprises to start small and scale their storage as their needs change. In addition, Violin Systems offers a range of professional services and support tiers.

Why the Company is Worth Watching: Despite its very public struggle over the past few years, Violin has managed to retain and regain the confidence of over one hundred large business

customers, including many Fortune 500 companies. Presumably, the loyalty is because the company's all flash array technology is so good that many customers are choosing to stay with the company and deploy the next generation of products, rather than switch to a competitor.

Furthermore, with its focus on software-based solutions, Violin Systems appears to be signaling its willingness to move with—and perhaps ahead of—the market. The company's roadmap includes NVMe solutions; and Stratecast expects to see the Concerto platform offered in a stand-alone version for deployment on any infrastructure. While the company acknowledges it is trailing competitors in its focus on software-defined storage, its commitment to innovation remains a significant strength. Violin has over 180 patents, the most recent granted in December 2017 for technology that reduces power consumption in storage platforms. In addition, the company says that 79% of employees in the new company are engineers. While great technology isn't enough to ensure success, **Stratecast is eagerly watching the new Violin Systems to see if the company can complete its reversal and once again achieve market leadership.**

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