

THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF DATA STORAGE EQUIPMENT IN BREAK-FIX SUPPORT SERVICES

As most organizations see the volume of their information they have to store or back up continuing to grow exponentially, IT Managers are focusing on the health of their data storage equipment more and more. Several key reasons explain why the technical support of data storage systems is becoming increasingly strategic in the break-fix equipment service market:

- Many purchasers of data storage equipment now require “one throat to choke” for all hardware and software within the four walls of the corporate data center. To be competitive, service vendors can no longer cherry-pick the equipment list they maintain solely based on their personal preferences. They must accept the entire bid and subcontract those areas of service where they do not show core competency. As a matter of fact, most third-party service providers prefer to subcontract the management of data storage equipment.
- Federal legislation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) have raised the bar when it comes to which data must now be retained and for how long. For example, under HIPAA electronic medical records must be retained for a minimum of six years. Unfortunately this increase in data retention has outpaced the decrease in data storage cost brought by ongoing advances in technology. So while the cost per byte stored has gone down drastically in the past 10 years, the amount of required data storage has increased at a much greater rate. This increases the financial burden of many companies to comply with regulations.
- Data backup windows are now more critical than they used to be. Due to the increasing amount of data to be backed up, any system failure during backup will impact a greater amount of data.
- Terrorist acts, such as the September 11 attacks, have heightened the need for Business Continuity (Disaster Recovery) plans. Data retention being a cornerstone of such plans, the need for data storage space has increased for this reason too.
- Data storage equipment is inherently electro-mechanical, in comparison with the solid-state nature of servers and peripherals. Because of their electro-mechanical nature and the corresponding moving parts, data storage systems are more prone to failure. By recognizing this higher failure rate, IT Managers are more willing to put their data storage equipment under a service contract. That’s why enterprise data storage systems are rarely supported on a Time & Materials (T&M) basis.
- Because electro-mechanical systems are complex, they typically require technical support by an experienced and certified Field Engineer, not just a person swapping parts. To reach the fastest and most effective technical support and minimize downtime, Field Engineers are trained and knowledgeable on each specific model of tape libraries and disk arrays.
- Purchasers of tape libraries have invested significantly in both tape drives and media. Purchasers of servers can routinely amortize their equipment in three years, then retire the servers and purchase brand-new equipment. In contrast, the life cycle of tape libraries is much longer (5 to 10 years on average). Therefore the average tape library’s lifespan will very often extend beyond the original manufacturer’s warranty coverage. Post-warranty support and maintenance contracts are the best way to preserve and extend the health of expensive data storage systems.

