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Top 25 Data Center Tech Companies - 2017

Company:

Nfina Technologies

Key Person:

Warren Nicholson
President & CEO

Description:

Provides highly reliable storage products, servers, workstations and hypervisors with market leading prices and warranty coverage

Website:

nfinausa.com

Today, data centers are at the center of modern technology, playing a vital role to upscale the capabilities of enterprises. However, if we go back to the time of World War II, the scenario had a sizeable mainframe computer in a large room and was communicated through punched cards. Moreover, business just a few decades later relied more on Indiana Jones-like warehouse with endless racks of physical servers. As the evolution continued, the usability of data centers improved as a whole enabling businesses to achieve more with less, both regarding physical space and the time required to create and maintain data.

Today, enterprises are opting for data centers that come with subscription and capacity on demand model. To match rising application demands, all prominent players in the market are leveraging the best practices to create the most potent and cost-efficient data centers. In 2013, Google invested close to \$7.35 billion in its internet infrastructure which perhaps represented the most significant construction effort in the data center history. The entire data center model is now changing thanks to its consolidation, cost-optimization, and the cloud support it renders. Therefore, cloud computing coupled with today's data center brings a gamut of benefits for enterprises with minimal environmental requirements for data center equipment and spaces. These developments bring forth enormous benefits and agility for on-premise solutions; many SMEs still find it difficult to progress to leverage the benefits of data centers.

To assist CIOs maneuver in the right direction while adopting the modern age data center, a distinguished panel of CEOs, CIOs, VCs, and analysts along with the CIO Applications' editorial board has selected the leading data center solution providers. The companies featured in this edition demonstrate an ability to develop innovative technologies combined with outstanding customer service.

We present to you Top 25 Data Center Tech Companies - 2017.

Nfina Technologies

The Open Vendor of Storage Technology

It doesn't take much of effort to comprehend that to be able to prevent the vaporization of scores of human beings—and power their homes instead, the underlying technology would have to be highly precise, reliable, and high-quality. Having worked as CTO at one of the largest nuclear power plant equipment manufacturers, Warren Nicholson is well acquainted with these attributes, and translates them into cutting-edge solutions for enterprises. Bit by the entrepreneurial bug in 1999 he founded his first company, N-Tron Corp, which made UNHACKABLE industrial Ethernet switches (a company he sold in 2010). He calls his current company the “Open Vendor” of storage technology.” In his resolute voice and with a justifiable tone of pride he states, “I never took any VC money at N-Tron, and now Nfina is being funded by me and its own revenue.”



THE FIRM'S PRODUCTS HAVE RECORDED MTBF IN EXCESS OF TWO MILLION HOURS WHICH MAKE THEM SOME OF THE MOST RELIABLE ENTERPRISE NETWORKING EQUIPMENT IN THE MARKET



The story of Nfina's evolution is an interesting one. On a lighter note Mr. Nicholson, with a laugh, meekly recounts Mrs. Nicholson had her bible study friends praying for him to get out of the house and stop driving her crazy after the N-Tron sale. Therefore, one could say that Nfina was created out of prayer for hard work, and to use the talents given to him by the creator to create jobs and new products.

The company during its initial years provided cloud-based services such as web hosting and VoIP. The customers weren't just happy, they were delighted when they found the services much faster than other providers. “Our hybrid storage model, but more importantly our caching technology was much ahead in its game which made our systems faster.” Today the company is a market recognized server and storage solutions provider with a diversified portfolio that ranges from thin clients costing a few hundred dollars to storage solutions that can cost up to half a million dollars.

Nfina offers two open off-the-shelf SAN products, the 700 series (24 bay, 3.5-inch drive unit) and the 800 series (48 bay, 2.5-inch drive unit). Both the models can plug-&-play with their storage expansion product called JBOD which is a 12 bay, 3.5-inch unit. Each unit can provide up to 12 GB/s SAS connectivity and up to 96 TB of storage, and can be daisy-chained up to, approximately, 128 units. “We also have the NAS line-up. For both the lines, we can do pure flash, SSD, NVMe, spinners, and any combination in between.” The company also provides servers (both racks and towers), workstations, PCs, and Hypervisors, all of which compete at the high-end and can be constructed with all flavors of Linux, or Windows. Nfina's bare metal solutions are certified on Microsoft Hyper-V, VMware vSphere, and Stratus everRun hypervisors. All of Nfina's products come in compact form factors with respective certifications from VMWare (6.0 and 6.5) and Microsoft (Storage Spaces and Storage Spaces Direct) and are priced aggressively to the extent that establishes Nfina as a price-leader in terms of storage products.

While the technology in play is similar to what any other vendor would offer, there are five points that answer as to why someone should consider Nfina.



Warren Nicholson,
President & CEO



ALL THE PRODUCTS COME IN COMPACT FORM FACTORS AND ARE PRICED AGGRESSIVELY TO THE EXTENT THAT ESTABLISHES NFINA AS A PRICE-LEADER IN TERMS OF STORAGE PRODUCTS



Every product that the company ships is free from any additional software—such as bloatware or adware—other than the bare essentials, the OS and required applications. This makes the Nfina Servers and Storage Solutions the most Cyber-Secure offerings, touting a score of zero for Nfina versus many for all other vendors, in terms of reported Homeland Security Vulnerabilities.

The storage products can plug-and-play with multiple leading platforms such as Windows, Linux and VMware. This software openness makes installing Nfina's storage products into an existing system a job of just a few minutes, and an open-systems approach avoids one-vendor solutions lock-in.

The third point is something that is best described by the expression 'spoilt for choice.' The company can provide Hyperconverged solutions powered by vSAN or leverage its partnership with Open-E Jovian to create a Hyperconverged environment for storage on VMware or Windows Hyper-V. It also offers appliances for SAN and NAS solutions that are Linux-based, and Windows-based, as well as ZFS-based solutions. The hardware that Nfina sells is very open is virtually software agnostic.

The last two differentiators, as Nicholson's effervescent cadence signifies, are special. The firm's products have recorded MTBF in excess of two million hours, which make them some of the most reliable enterprise storage equipment in the market.

And, the exceptional reliability comes along with a market-leading warranty of five years. This aspect contrasts with the fact that a three-year warranty with the option of paid fourth and fifth years is the current market paradigm. In addition to the standard warranty, customers can also go for "four-hour next day response or same day response."

Further explaining his open "made in the USA" philosophy, Nicholson states that his firm doesn't outsource assembling but builds every product it ships, as per customers' desired software and hardware configurations at its Mobile (Alabama) facility. Upon arrival, every component undergoes rigorous quality checks, and every detail is logged to ensure that any problem in the future can be quickly and accurately resolved. Tech support and customer service are also located in Mobile.

To enhance its strengths in the storage product market, Nfina has been developing a software for its NAS portfolio along with a complementary hardware design. This Linux-based NAS solution is expected to hit the market in 2018. The company has been growing at an inspiring rate of approximately 400 percent annually, of which a large part can be ascribed to its zeal for innovation. In partnership with the University of South Alabama and the State of Alabama, Nfina has been co-developing a client-server monitoring software for storage and networking equipment for the last two years with plans to roll it out for beta-testing in 2018. The software will have predictive capabilities, an open architecture which will allow users to import third-party SNMP MIBs, and will be scalable to monitor mini data centers and larger cloud-based deployments alike.

With the volume of data bound to explode in the coming years, storage requirements of the world will grow exponentially. And, Nfina appears to be well positioned to satiate the data hunger of enterprises with all at its disposal. **CA**