

Develop an intelligent data backup solution with cloud technologies



About Emilio Griman

Emilio Griman is the IBM SmartCloud Managed Services Executive for complex enablement implementations. In this role, he is responsible for defining a set of service offerings that focus on implementation services, managed services and optimization services for servers and storage. Prior to his current position, Emilio worked as Service Delivery Executive for IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup Services.

An IBM expert shares his insight on how cloud can improve backup, help business

According to IDG market research, many IT decision makers now view cloud computing as an attractive platform for data backup.¹ They look to cloud for its reliability, its scalability, its pay-as-you-go pricing models and its ability to give organizations nearly ubiquitous access to their stored data.

To get a better handle on today's data backup challenges and how cloud can help overcome them, IBM sat down with IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup executive Emilio Griman. In this interview, Griman shares his insights on cloud capabilities. His views have been gleaned from years of implementing cloud solutions in complex data center environments across the globe.

Q: What are some of the top concerns organizations have today about backing up data?

EG: Data right now is driving business. Businesses are maintaining data for a longer time than ever before in order to mine it for business insight. The insight that this data provides is becoming a big differentiator in the market—driving new business, determining what types of business you can go after, how you can make your business more effective.

But the challenge is continued data growth. As data grows, it's harder to protect, harder to back up. Often, when data is generated, companies don't immediately know what value it might bring to the company, so they want to keep it for a longer period of time.



This presents problems in a traditional storage environment. As more data is generated and companies want to keep it longer, they incur more and more capital expenses to buy more and more storage. They incur additional costs in training their employees for the skills they need to handle it all. Also, traditional backups don't always allow you to be able to go in and pinpoint the specific data element you want—from within this huge continuum of data—to allow you to do your business.

So those are some of the top backup concerns—how to back up all this data, how to pay for the backup and how to pinpoint the data you need, when you need it. Right now, in the marketplace, companies are looking for one solution that can help them with all these concerns.

Q: Why are so many organizations turning to cloud for intelligent data backup solutions?

EG: I think there are really four reasons. The first is to save money. Cloud solutions—as a managed service—can help clients avoid capital investment commitments. That's a big benefit to organizations today. Second is to save IT resources. If you're outsourcing your cloud solution, backup work is done by a cloud provider like IBM. This frees up IT staff time to work on projects that can bring more strategic value to the business. The third is the opportunities cloud provides for collaboration. Cloud gives you the ability to access data from anywhere, at any time, making collaboration easier, and this can be a huge benefit. The fourth reason is scalability. If you look at the retail market, as an example, they require more backup space during holiday periods. The best cloud providers can provide this capability on demand.

Q: What advantages does cloud-based data backup have over traditional tape backup?

EG: Cloud-based data backup is an improvement over traditional methods in at least three areas. First, as I said before, scalability is increasingly important to companies, and tape is non-scalable. With tape, you need to keep acquiring more and more units as data grows. You need to store

them, and you incur all the costs that come with that. This is especially true in companies with distributed or remote offices, because you need to acquire backup equipment for every office. All this can be very costly and cumbersome.

Tape backup also presents a problem with data reliability. Often, no one has the chance to go back and validate that the right data made it onto the tapes, so you can't be sure that you have a complete backup.

The third issue presented by traditional tape backup is one of data availability. How do you search tapes? If you need data from a specific month, a specific year, it takes a lot of manual labor to go back and get that information. Also, while the life expectancy of a tape is seven to 10 years, new formats keep coming along and the older formats become harder to read or even obsolete—making data even harder to find.

I really think that in these three areas—scalability, backup reliability and data availability—cloud improves significantly upon traditional tape backup.

Q: What type of data do you think is appropriate for cloud backup?

EG: With current encryption, it has become easier to securely back up different types of data to the cloud. However, as we move toward globalization, some companies are reluctant to put very sensitive or very proprietary data onto the cloud—including business critical data and customer data. Regardless of whether it's a public cloud or a private cloud, companies are very concerned about that issue.

But cloud technologies can still be helpful to these companies. They may choose not to back up this type of Tier 1 data to a cloud, but they can still obtain benefits by backing up Tier 2 and Tier 3 data to a third-party cloud, and having the cloud provider manage it on their behalf. They can migrate this less sensitive data, and data that's not being used often, from expensive traditional backup to the less expensive cloud backup.

A global cloud provider like IBM can also support data privacy requirements by enabling clients to back up data

within country boundaries. This is especially important in some parts of the world where there are stringent regulations concerning data privacy.

Q: What are some of the characteristics of an intelligent data backup plan?

EG: More and more today, organizations are looking for a backup plan that not just protects data, but that actually drives business. An intelligent backup plan is a data backup plan, like cloud backup, that can help accomplish these goals, while mitigating risk.

For example, a lot of companies are looking to intelligent data mining to provide the type of business insight that can improve their ability to compete. To accomplish this, you need to make sure that data is readily available. Cloud backup—which can make data accessible to any authorized user at any time, from any place—lets you do that. It's a huge advantage. Also, as cloud technologies continue to progress, there will be a time when third-party providers like IBM will have the analytics to help you mine this data to grow your business.

The ability to tier data—so that you don't incur expensive backup costs for Tier 2 or Tier 3 data—is also part of an intelligent backup solution, and cloud can help you keep backup costs low for these data sets. Being able to classify data backup becomes more and more important as data continues to grow.

Q: How do you respond to organizations that say they can put together an intelligent data backup plan in-house?

EG: You could, but then you still need to maintain the hardware environment; you still need to ensure that everything is executed properly; you still need to ensure your data is properly secured; and you still need to buy more and more storage to keep up with demand.

How do we do it better? Teaming with a third-party cloud provider like IBM frees you from all the work that goes into developing an intelligent backup plan in-house, so IT resources can focus on projects that bring more strategic value to the business.

Q: What type of questions should an organization ask itself to determine whether its current data backup plan is suitable to meet organizational goals?

EG: First, you should ask yourself if you can access your information anytime, from anywhere. If the answer is no, you should consider cloud computing. And once you consider cloud computing, you should ask yourself:

1. Does my potential cloud provider offer the encryption and security needed to make my data as safe as possible within the cloud?
2. As my business grows, can the cloud grow with me? Does it provide backup capacity on demand? Can I get additional backup capacity within hours if I need it?
3. Is my potential cloud provider reliable? Has it been around for a while? (Remember, switching data from one provider to another isn't an easy task.)

Q: There are other cloud-based backup solutions on the market. What sets IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup apart?

EG: First of all is our reach. We are a global company, and we're well known for the quality of our services around the world. Second is our commitment to being sensitive to our clients' needs. We listen to our clients and provide solutions based on what they want and what they need. We can craft solutions quickly to help meet the client's current and long-term requirements. Third, when you deal with IBM, you're dealing with a company that has been around for over 100 years. Not many cloud providers in the market can say that. If a client signs up with us, they know we're not going away after a few years. Finally, I think clients come to us because of the quality of our technology. Our cloud technologies are always evolving, and in the future we will be able to offer additional services that can bring more and more benefits to the client.

For more information

Want to learn more about cloud-based data backup in general or IBM SmartCloud Managed Backup in particular? Read our [case for cloud](#) and our [data backup buyer's guide](#). For more information, call 1-800 IBM-7080 or visit the following website:
ibm.com/cloud/data-backup



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¹ IDG Enterprise Cloud Computing Study, IDG, 2012



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