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Enterprise and Cloud Storage

Storage Trends for 2026

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Biography

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His executive leadership experience also includes: CMO and Senior VP of Alliances for all-flash storage provider Violin Memory, and Senior Vice President of Product Management and Product Marketing for EMC's Enterprise & Mid-range Systems Division.

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Abstract

As we move into 2026, the global data landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, with the total volume of data created expected to surge to 230–240 zettabytes. This exponential growth is no longer just a challenge of capacity; it has become the catalyst for a fundamental rethink of enterprise storage architecture. In 2026, storage is shifting from a passive back-end utility to an active, intelligent pillar of the modern business, driven by the massive demands of Generative and Agentic AI, a worsening cyber-threat landscape, and a critical global focus on energy efficiency. In this article the author looks at some of the forthcoming trends we can expect to see.

Introduction

The storage ecosystem is becoming faster, greener and more resilient than ever before, and 2026 is projected to be a phenomenal year for enterprise storage. New alignments, convergence, and unbridled growth are changing the way to think about storage infrastructure.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and enterprise storage are now inextricably linked. The convergence of cybersecurity and enterprise storage has catapulted cyber resilient

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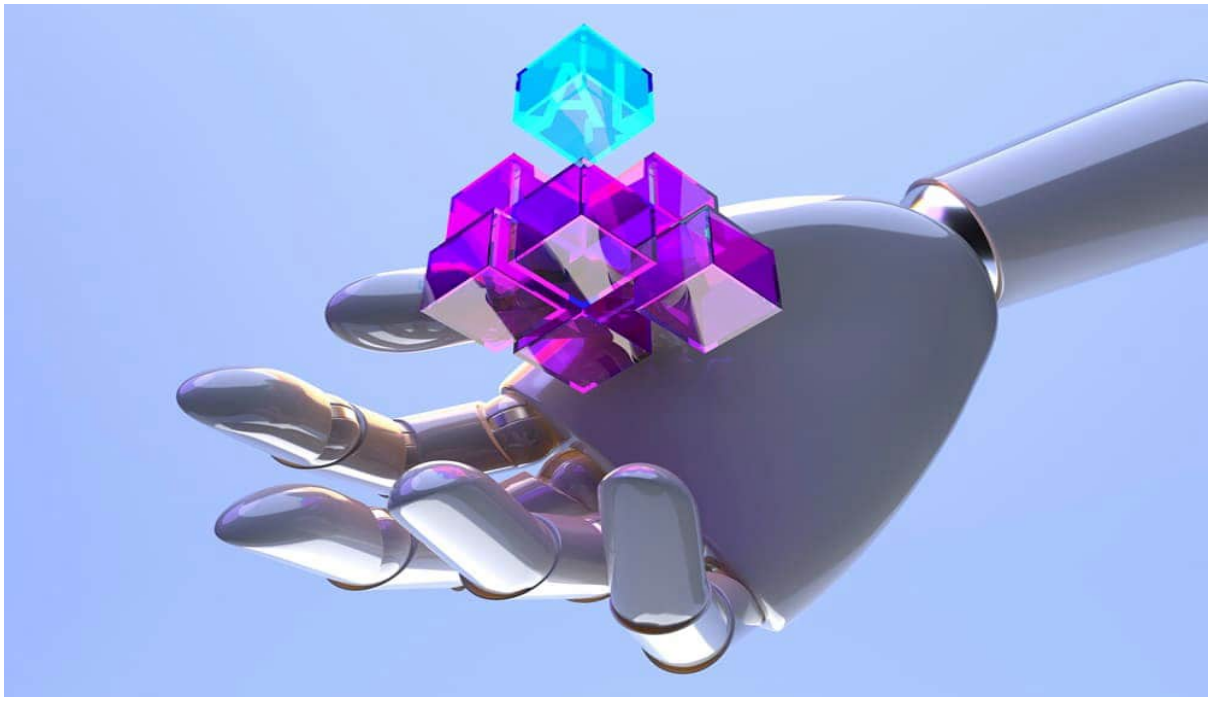
storage to the forefront of the enterprise market; and power efficiency and enterprise storage means we are seeing power savings becoming the new currency in data centres.

The link between capital expenditure (CAPEX)/operating expenditure (OPEX) and enterprise storage means there are opportunities to reduce costs change and the conversation about data infrastructure. When it comes to data volume growth and enterprise storage, one cannot thrive without the other. Embedded in each and every one of these fascinating combinations is a trend that is worth exploring.

The top five storage trends of 2026 set the table for what is gearing up to be a power-packed, AI-boosted, cyber-focused year for enterprise storage. These trends are derived from extensive input from customers, channel partners, analysts, and technical alliance partners on a global basis.



Storage Trend #1: Pivot to AI – The Continued Rise of AI Applications and Workloads to Accelerate Enterprise Transformation

The rapid adoption of AI has had massive, direct implications on enterprise storage infrastructure. In 2026, the deployments of AI are expected to continue exponentially and unabated, as enterprises look to transform themselves with AI. Gartner forecasts that more than 80% of enterprises will have used AI APIs or deployed AI-enabled applications by 2026, moving AI technologies from a pilot phase into core enterprise operations[1].

This “AI transformation” mega-trend signals a pivot to AI-centric storage architecture, higher performance solutions for retrieval-based AI workloads, and AI

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overlays that leverage existing infrastructure to maximize investments in enterprise storage. The AI blueprint that is poised to become the 'AI architecture of the year' for 2026 is the Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) workflow deployment architecture, which dramatically improves the accuracy and relevancy of AI models.

Storage Trend #2: Leap Forward in Cybersecurity – Cyber Storage Resilience to Make Safeguards More Proactive and Pre-emptive

A shift is happening in the enterprise market from reliance on traditional detection and response in cybersecurity to prioritizing proactive cyber defence and pre-emptive measures to make the storage infrastructure truly cyber secure. On top of that, AI threats in cyber are increasing at an alarming rate. Cyber criminals are becoming ever more sophisticated in using AI to make cyberattacks more dangerous, sneakier, and harder to detect.

According to PwC's 2026 Global Digital Trust Insights survey[2], 60% of business and tech leaders rank cyber risk investment in their top three strategic. Only 6% feel confident across all vulnerabilities surveyed. Furthermore, cyber talent skills shortages remain one of the biggest barriers to cybersecurity progress.

This is why, in 2026, enterprise cyber storage resilience and recovery will have to become part of all enterprises' comprehensive cybersecurity strategies. A prime example of being proactive is using a cyber detection capability that is built into primary storage. A key example of being pre-emptive is using an automated cyber protection capability to automate the taking of immutable snapshots of data to expedite recovery from an attack.

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Storage Trend #3: Rethink capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operating expenditure (OPEX) – Continued Pressure on IT Budgets to Create Opportunity for Enterprise Storage

Information technology is foundational to all enterprises globally. Tech is not simply discretionary anymore. In other words, IT budgets will continue to be essential. Gartner projected earlier this year that, by the end of 2025, worldwide IT spending is expected to total $5.43 trillion in 2025, an increase of 7.9% from 2024. Global IT spending is projected to reach $6.08 trillion in 2026, a 9.8% increase from 2025, driven largely by significant investments in AI infrastructure, software, and devices. However, pressure will continue to mount in 2026 to make IT more cost-efficient and to reallocate budget away from traditional infrastructure and into AI and other emerging technologies[3].

Enterprise storage is critical for reducing CAPEX and OPEX through consolidation, power efficiency gains, and having more high-end enterprise storage capacity in smaller form-factors. By freeing up money from storage budgets, enterprises will be able in 2026 to create and better fund new innovation projects, including Agentic AI. While IT budgets may be holding steady or slightly growing by single digits for the most part, the “do more with less” mantra is a cornerstone of the new pressure to reign in IT spending.

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Storage Trend #4: Power to the Storage − Increasing Demand for Power Efficiency to Reshape Data Infrastructure

The need for more power will continue to increase in data centres in 2026, leading to new mandates to reallocate and free up power sources for power-hungry AI workloads and applications. Not only is AI a major factor in increased power consumption, but data-intensive, non-AI tech also demands more power. According to 451 Research, data centres across the U.S. are on track to require 22% more grid power by the end of 2025 than they did one year ago, and this trend will continue into the new year. In 2026, data centre demand in the U.S. alone will rise to 75.8 GW for IT equipment. In the longer term, data centres are projected[4] to need nearly three times as much power by the year 2030 as they did in 2024.

Enterprises will be looking to generate power savings in 2026 by reducing the use of energy in their enterprise data infrastructure and elsewhere. This will require the adoption of more power-efficient storage systems and related technologies that fuel the data infrastructure. With technology no longer discretionary in enterprises, the need for better power management has never been more important.

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Storage Trend #5: Capture More Data, More Unified Storage − Unbridled Growth of Data to Force the Need to Combine Cyber, AI, Power, CAPEX/OPEX and Backup

Expect unbridled growth in data in 2026. According to Statista, the global data volume was approximately 149 zettabytes in 2024. By the end of 2025, the world will surpass 181 zettabytes of data. By 2026, the amount of data created is expected to reach 230–240 zettabytes. Enormous jumps in digital information will surely require big storage capacity growth. This trend ties back to the other four storage trends of 2026 – AI, cyber, CAPEX/OPEX and power usage. But it also introduces a fifth dimension that cannot be overlooked – with all that data growth that is expected over the next year comes the need for more backup and data protection. Unbridled data growth will translate into unbridled backup[5].

Backup typically impedes the performance of applications and workloads, no matter what they are. If the backup system is fast, then there is less impact on primary workloads and applications. When you need to restore data – and data is clearly the lifeblood of every enterprise – data restoration needs to be as fast as possible. In 2026, more organisations will take action to fill the need to be able to get backup repositories up and running near-instantaneously.

It's enterprise storage at the speed of AI-boosted business in a power-hungry, rapidly evolving cyber world. The question now, is how will your enterprise adapt to these storage trends, to avoid being left behind?

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