

In Conversation

In Conversation with Eric Herzog

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As Infinidat accelerates its innovation rates with the launch of its InfiniBox® solid state array platform, we catch up with Eric Herzog, Chief Marketing Officer at Infinidat to find out what is driving the company's success in the high-end enterprise storage world.

Eric Herzog is the Chief Marketing Officer, Infinidat (<https://www.infinidat.com>). A former senior executive at global storage providers EMC and IBM, Herzog has over 40 years' experience in the enterprise storage industry, managing all aspects of marketing, product management, and business development in both start-ups and Fortune 500 companies.

Prior to joining Infinidat, Herzog was CMO and VP of Global Storage Channels at IBM Storage Solutions, where he was responsible for worldwide product marketing and management for IBM's storage systems, software-defined storage, hyper converged infrastructure, and global storage channels. Herzog's 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 responsible for the VNX, VMAX, and VNXe family of storage solutions.

He has been recognised as "Marketer/CMO of the Year" (Jan 2021), "Top 100 Hybrid Cloud Influencers" (March 2021), and "Top 100 AI and Big Data Influencers" (March 2020).

Eric blogs at <https://www.infinidat.com/en/blog>



Q – For the fourth year running, Infinidat has been listed in Gartner's magic quadrant as a leader for primary storage. What's the secret of Infinidat's success?

Infinidat is in the high-end enterprise storage marketplace, and we are delighted to be recognized by Gartner as a leader in its Primary Storage Magic Quadrant for four years in a row. Gartner is highly regarded by CIOs, VPs of infrastructure and channel partners, so for us to appear, yet again, as a leader that supports them is very pleasing.

We are global in nature. Our head office is in Herzliya, Israel and we have our European headquarters in the UK, with a US headquarters in the Boston, Massachusetts. Our customers span all regions, the Americas, EMEA, and Asia, particularly in Japan. It is said that if you can make it in Japan, you can make it anywhere! We also have customers in India, Australia and New Zealand and are currently building out our Asia sales teams.

Our products are used by the Global Fortune 2000. In fact, if you look at the Fortune 50, more than 25% of those organizations are using Infinidat products, which considering that we're a relatively small company, is pretty amazing.

Q – Why is storage such a key passion of yours?

I have specialized in storage for over 40 years and it's probably the most innovative and interesting sector in IT. The industry can't turn around without seeing intense competition and intense innovation in the storage world. At EMC, I was a senior vice president where we developed one of the first external storage systems in the world, called the Symmetrix. I have also done seven start-ups, which have all gone on to be highly successful and before I came to Infinidat, I was the Chief Marketing Officer and Vice President Global Channels for IBM storage.

At Infinidat, our area of expertise is very much high-end enterprise storage. Our technology is unique. We do not use any custom hardware: we don't do custom ASICs, no custom chips, all the components are off-the-shelf. The real magic is what we do with our storage software stack – it allows us to be highly differentiated in what we do. We call it software driven storage and that's what makes our solutions so unique and award-winning.

We only have three products: the InfiniBox, InfiniBox™ SSA II and InfiniGuard® – the same storage software base works on all three. This makes it super easy to use. In fact, organizations often tell us that their InfiniBox just sits there, working away autonomously and automatically, handling high end enterprise workloads such as SAP, Oracle, Mongo, Cassandra. Highly transactional, business applications are where we excel.

When a customer points new servers or assigns new applications to our storage, the storage automatically and autonomously adjusts itself to optimize performance. In the traditional world of enterprise storage, there would be a need for storage tuning where storage admins would need to tune the storage manually, selecting a number of different parameters in order to optimize capabilities. But with InfiniBox, it is all done automatically. From a manpower perspective, managing high-end enterprise storage can take hours and hours as it is core to business' operations, so the ability to have this done automatically and autonomously brings many cost savings for our customers.

Q – Infinidat is noted for its 'white glove' support and service. Tell us more.

Infinidat is very support and service oriented – we are totally customer centric. One of the things that has been noted, both in the Gartner Magic Quadrant and several other storage analyst write-ups, is our white glove support and service. It goes well beyond the experience normally given by a small company and sets us apart from our competition, even the large, global companies we compete against. We really know how to hold the hand of an enterprise account and take good care of them.

Every account is assigned a technical advisor. It's very different from tech support. We have a separate team that does tech support. The technical adviser's job is to

provide advice on how to optimize storage deployment for that company, so they are application and workload focused. For example, several of our technical advisors have previously worked at Oracle and SAP. When they're talking to customers, they can take an application perspective and appreciate how storage can optimize those applications. It's a key differentiator that not only are our technical advisors very sophisticated from a technical perspective, they are also application oriented and can combine both layers.

On top of these benefits, the support we provide comes at no extra charge. Having come from two of our competitors that only offer chargeable technical support, for us to do this free of charge really does set us apart.

Infinidat's business model is very different from other players in the high-end enterprise storage space. We believe we are more transparent. Some companies will sell a product that comes with base software and if the customer wants additional features, they have to pay extra. With Infinidat, software licensing is all inclusive. In fact, when we invoice a customer there tends to be only three items on the invoice. After working at two of the biggest storage companies, I can tell you that their invoices have 20, 30 or 40 items listed for a single product, so to present the Finance team with an invoice displaying only three items makes them very happy.

For instance as an example of what comes as standard, this year we announced a cyber resilient technology solution called InfiniSafe. This solution is included with InfiniBox and InfiniBox SSA II primary storage systems, along with our InfiniGuard purpose-built backup appliance. There is no additional cost. As long as the customer is up-to-date with software licensing, they just download the newest version of the code and are ready to go. Just because we are adding new features, it doesn't mean those features are chargeable.

The other unique aspect of our business model is a flexible approach to consuming our products. Firstly, a customer could just buy or lease it. We also offer a combination model that's part capital expenditure and part operational expenditure. When you get the storage system you can buy into a base amount of capacity and then pay for additional storage capacity as you need it. Because the unit comes completely loaded with storage, we don't need to send you anything – it just sits there and is ready to use when you need it – we don't need to visit your premises to install additional storage.

This is particularly useful as we deal with government agencies all over the world, as well as many of the Fortune 500 and it can be difficult to schedule visits to their data centres to add this or that. Even post-Covid, it can still take three weeks or more to get it scheduled and in certain parts of the governments all over the world, it can be six months before we get someone authorized to come on-site.

For us, because the storage is fully loaded, all we do is flip a switch remotely and they pay for the additional capacity. It's a hybrid model, part CAPEX where you pay upfront, just as if you were buying outright, but then part OPEX.

Our third business model is one hundred percent storage as a service. In this case, we retain legal ownership and it becomes a pay as you go model – like the way people consume the cloud, except that it's on premises.

One interesting aspect of our technology is that we are very strong with small and medium cloud providers all over the world, Core DataCloud being an example in the UK. There's a good reason for this – small and medium sized cloud providers and managed service providers don't have the technological capabilities of Google, Amazon or Microsoft Azure. At the same time, our technology lends itself to cloud deployment models.

For example, a customer in South Africa was using our InfiniGuard product, which is our secondary storage backup product. They had 14 competitive storage systems in two data centres: seven products in one data centre and seven in another. Using Infinidat storage, they were able to consolidate the 14 different products into two (one in each data centre), saving on floor space, power, cooling, and operational manpower. Plus, because they were then only managing two storage systems instead of 14 separate storage systems, it reduced capital and operational expenditures as well.

Likewise, a major global telco customer has almost 200 petabytes of storage and has told us point blank, that we saved them over \$100 million in the last couple of years. One of our US customers – a Fortune 100 account – had 57 competitor storage products and were looking to buy more because they needed additional storage. They bought ten units from us and were able to not only gain additional storage, but our system consolidated all 57 into 10 InfiniBoxes, dramatically reducing IT CAPEX and OPEX.

Finally, when it comes to what you do with all the hardware at the end of life, instead of trying to manage recycling the components of 57 storage products, it becomes easier to recycle only 10 when they move to the next generation of the InfiniBox. This makes Infinidat a good choice in terms of being environmentally sustainable.

Q – Tell us about the new InfiniBox SSA II.

We recently launched the next generation of InfiniBox – the InfiniBox SSA II (<https://www.itceoscfos.com/infinidat-launches-infinibox-ssa-ii>). This allows us to add to our InfiniBox portfolio – an all flash array with the InfiniBox SSA II. Our original solution, the InfiniBox, is a hybrid array – part flash and part hard disk. Additionally, the InfiniBox SSA II gives us the highest performing product in the industry. One of the key metrics is that the InfiniBox SSA II delivers lower latency than any other comparable enterprise storage platform.

The lower storage latency, the application and workload run faster - whether that's Oracle, SAP, Mongo, Cassandra, or any other highly transactional application. For example, we had a customer running an SAP workload that took two and a half hours. They went to the first generation InfiniBox SSA, and that workload time

dropped to 20 minutes. Using real-world application testing, the InfiniBox SSA II has outperformed competitors by 300%.

Alongside incredible performance with the SSA II is the ability to leverage storage to help thwart malware and ransomware attacks, what is known as our InfiniSafe®. We originally introduced upgrades to our InfiniGuard product in February 2022 (<https://www.itceoscfos.com/infinidat-updates-infiniguard>) to build greater cyber resilience with InfiniSafe.

A recent IDC survey reveals that around 70% of cyber-attacks are not reported. This is now likely to change as governments around the world introduce new cyber security legislation requiring all companies, regardless of their size, to report whether they have been the subject of a cyber-attack.

With InfiniBox SSA II we have also introduced InfiniOps that features AIOps inside the box with InfiniVerse®. This allows us to tell the end user about the capacity they're using and project how much more they will need and when they are going to need it. We can also tell them about the performance of the entire configuration.

So, we don't just look at our storage, we can look at when you run from the storage through the network to the server, to find the latency level not just in our own storage box, but across the network and through to the server. In other words, it's what Mr. Oracle or Mr. SAP would see. When it comes to latency, there is storage latency, network latency, and servers have latency too. In addition to InfiniOps within our storage solutions, is our ability to integrate with the third party AIOps data centre products, such as VMware and ServiceNow. The packages are looking to report across data centres, so being able to see our Infinidat storage allows that capability. They want to be able to say, 'here's what the storage does'. So, we've exposed an API that allows them to gather a certain amount of data off the storage and report it in their consoles.

From an AIOps perspective we have also done a fair amount of integration on the DevOps side. We make sure that we are fully integrated with container environments, such as Red Hat, Kubernetes, and VMware Tanzu. We also integrate with Red Hat and the Ansible platform that is designed for non-storage people, non-network people and non-server people to configure storage, networks, and servers.

Now, of course, every network admin, storage admin, and server admin are having sleepless nights over that – especially the storage guys, because if the DevOps mess up or lose valuable data, the guy who is going to get fired is the storage guy. But with Ansible, non-storage IT team members can safely deploy and manage storage.

Q – Infinidat continues to receive accolades – can we expect to see more of the same in the future?

It is very heart warming to see Infinidat gaining so many accolades, both for its products and for the company. We have already won several channel and product

awards, our CEO has just been nominated for one award, and I'm nominated for another. Being classed as a leader in Gartner's Primary Storage Magic Quadrant for four years in a row is also a huge achievement. We are relatively small, fast growing and agile. Our 'white glove' approach to serving customers, our track record for delivering outstandingly innovative products and our corporate culture to 'serve our customers' is helping us to stay ahead of the power curve. No matter how large we grow, Infinidat's calling will always remain the same – to serve. Serving our customers well is something we are committed to continue doing.