

5 Considerations Before Modernizing Backup and Disaster Recovery

Rick Vanover of Veeam talks about confronting ransomware, getting cloud economics right and more big-picture issues for companies modernizing with hybrid and multicloud IT infrastructures.



By Tom Mangan May 18, 2021

There's a lot to admire in the scale and flexibility of cloud and hybrid IT infrastructure. And there's a lot to worry about in a quest to modernize enterprise IT systems. Missteps and oversights can prove costly if ransomware or natural disasters paralyze IT operations.

Figuring it all out has been Rick Vanover's professional preoccupation since 2009. That's the year he went to work for Veeam, the cloud backup specialists. As the company's senior director of product strategy, Vanover guides clients toward business-continuity technologies that anticipate (and attempt to resolve) their backup dilemmas.

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In December 2020, Vanover's colleagues at Veeam commissioned a survey of 3,000 enterprises in 28 nations. The survey revealed a rising desire to leverage [cloud technologies](#) and [modernize IT operations](#). Moreover, respondents' ambitions fit a broad pattern of [increasing complexity in IT environments](#).

Among the survey findings:

- ▼ 60% plan to add more cloud services in their IT delivery strategies.
- ▼ 54% plan to ramp up a [hybrid-IT](#) delivery strategy with IaaS hosted infrastructure.
- ▼ 48% plan to accelerate usage of SaaS offerings.

“This shift must be highly considered when examining resources such as data protection and management,” the report’s authors said. “With the large shift to cloud-based IT strategy data, support systems like backup and DR must be modernized in parallel.”

The survey also revealed crucial gaps in backup policies and procedures. For instance, 80% of respondents agreed their organizations cannot recover applications fast enough to keep their users productive. Moreover, 76% agreed there’s a gap between their frequency of backups and how much data they can afford to lose if systems go down.

Helping companies close these gaps is one Vanover’s primary responsibilities. In an interview with The Forecast by Nutanix, Vanover revealed some of the key insights he gleaned at Veeam on its rise to the top echelons of cloud-backup providers.



He talked about the relentless threat of ransomware, the need to weigh the business requirements of backup, the importance of cloud economics, the difficult choices that must be made, and a handy framework for establishing backup-and-recovery strategies.

Ransomware Resiliency is Mandatory

Vanover’s clients are devoting more time and money to [hybrid and multicloud IT infrastructures](#). This requires a holistic, well-thought-out strategy that accounts for business needs, marketplace demands, existing technologies and available talent.

For all these general challenges, a specific threat — ransomware — looms largest on Vanover’s list of pressing concerns.

"I think organizations don't make enough preparations for ransomware," Vanover said.

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Backup-and-recovery programs need specific resiliency against ransomware, he added.


But how serious is the threat of ransomware? "Mortal fear" is appropriate for both IT admins and end users, he said.

"We're never going to be done with it," Vanover cautioned. Resiliency will be key to grappling with the ransomware threat.

Backup Strategy Must Match Business Needs

Vanover noted that companies trying to modernize their backups often try to match a new IT configuration with an existing configuration. But that can be a counterproductive use of the latest, most innovative backup technologies.

Another stumbling block: Customers want to hold onto policies and procedures that may have served them well in different circumstances over the years. "Well, what you're doing is propagating the bad design of the past," Vanover cautioned.

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"What they really should have done is go talk to the stakeholders and say, 'What's the expectation of the business?'" he said. "Because I guarantee you, there's always a gap between what the product is configured to do versus what the product is implemented to do."

Cloud Economics and Scale are Pivotal

Essentially limitless storage makes the public cloud an attractive backup option — until the cloud providers' invoices start arriving. All uses of public cloud disk space and bandwidth generate fees that companies may not anticipate. That inevitably leads to missteps.

“An example would be just simply FTPing files to the cloud. That’s the most horrible thing you could do,” Vanover said. “You need a data mover that’s cloud-ready and smart and has a cloud economic model built into it.”

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Some IT departments are doing things like trying to move an on-premises, multitiered monolithic app into the public cloud without modeling the economics of the move.

“They get into a scenario where they don’t have the right tools in the cloud,” Vanover said.

Moreover, companies often overlook how scale affects cloud economics.

“People make decisions that don’t align with their data growth,” he added.

Everything works great on day one, he said, but IT leaders may be in for expensive surprises if they haven’t accounted for how much things change after three or four months of persistent data growth.

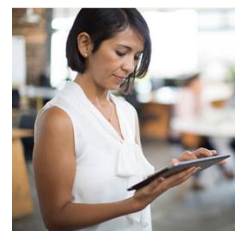
Backup Comes Down to Choices

We live in an age of instant gratification. Everybody wants everything right now. But that’s not always practical when making business-continuity plans, Vanover said.

“When it comes to backup, do you want something that’s storage efficient or do you want something that’s fast, or do you want something that’s low cost or do you want something that’s easy to use? Sometimes you can’t have it all.”

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All backup decisions are business decisions, even if they are not driving forces within an organization, Vanover said.

“I’ll be the first to say that we don’t drive the business,” he conceded. “We’re loosely equivalent to this insurance policy that nobody wants to cash.”

Trust the 3-2-1 rule for Backups

Vanover and his Veeam colleagues like to recommend the 3-2-1 rule, which means: three different copies of your data on two different media, with one of them off-site.

“The beautiful thing about that is that it doesn’t prescribe any specific technology,” he said.

“It doesn’t prescribe any specific transport method and it can really address nearly any failure scenario. So, I love the versatility of that rule.”

The starting point for any organization is identifying where the data is and understanding what must be protected. This sets the stage for the ensuing phases of business continuity: protection, response and recovery.

“And that really can let you handle anything,” he concluded. “It can help you scale. It can help you recover from ransomware.”



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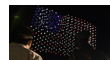
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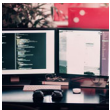
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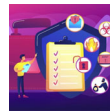
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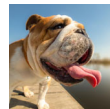
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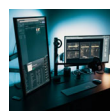
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