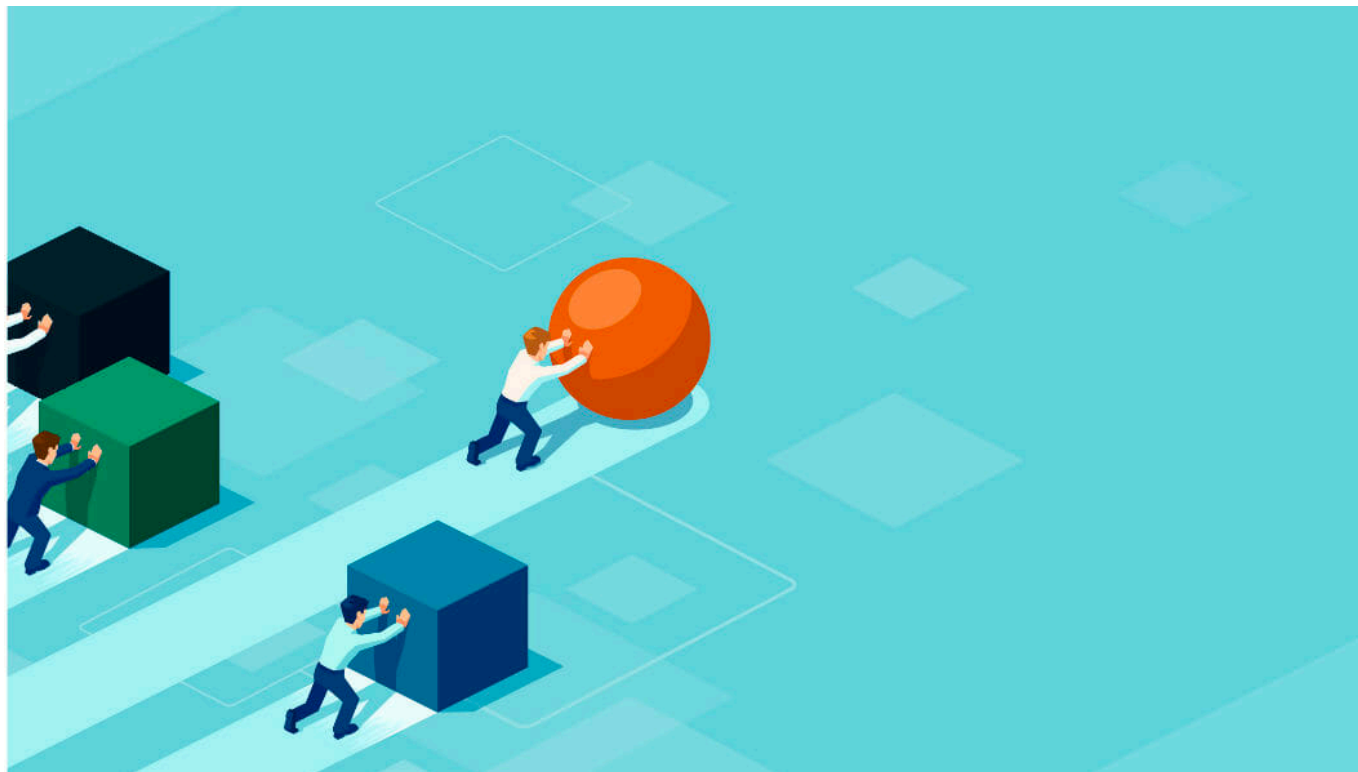


# Dell Announces Plans to Catch Up to Evergreen//One



Wait, did we hear that correctly? Dell is trying to reinvigorate its business model by shifting to a complete as-a-service offering with Project Apex? Does this mean with Project Apex, Dell has finally come to realize that its history of maintenance-fee demands no longer works in the 2020 economy?

I think the real question is: Why does it take the impact of a pandemic for a vendor to recognize that the right focus should be on doing what's best for its customers. Meanwhile, this philosophy has been at the [heart of Pure Storage](#) since day 1.

Let's take a moment to break down this announcement and comment on what's in and out. And let's see how it compares to Evergreen//One™—an offering that's been in the market since 2018, one year before HPE GreenLake and at least three years before Dell's Project Apex (assuming it makes its summer 2021 commitment).

## What Is Project Apex?

Today, it's nothing more than an idea—slides on the big stage at a vendor's virtual event. If it is delivered, it initially would be an on-premises storage-as-a-service model based on Dell's block-and-file portfolio for the United States market in the summer of 2021. This seems to leave out object storage and certainly fails to address the needs of its global customer base.

**Evergreen//One** is a mature consumption model that has been in the market for over two years now. All

of Pure's storage hardware and software products are part of a consumption-based program available to our customers globally. And Evergreen//One is designed for OPEX treatment with no leasing organizations involved: Simple.

## What Does Project Apex Include?

Initially just Dell's block and file offerings along with a cloud-management console that is yet to be fully developed and delivered.

**Evergreen//One** provides access to our entire suite of products: block, file, and object storage, along with API and orchestration services, managed independently, or with our Pure1® cloud-based management console.

## How Is Project Apex Managed?

This is where the story shifts from vision to apparent vaporware. A cloud console, available sometime in 2021, will deliver what Dell spokespeople call "a unified and seamless experience." Think about that: Dell is taking its existing products and attempting to force them into an as-a-service model—in which each product has its own independent management APIs—and somehow deliver a unified and seamless experience. To date, Dell has been unsuccessful at unifying the products it currently offers, each having its own management consoles. So, we have doubts about how a new operating/leasing model is supposed to stitch that together, and the likelihood of successful delivery given Dell's history.

**Evergreen//One** is based on a portfolio that is designed with a simplicity-first mantra for interoperability and ease of use, ensuring that you're not forced to find new ways to integrate disparate products together to address your business goals as you scale. Teams benefit from a common user experience designed to be intuitive and straightforward. And it all can optionally be managed by Pure's existing Pure1 cloud-management and workload-planning software. Pure1 allows you to easily manage your fleet—from traditional to mobile devices—with added intelligence that you can use to plan for new workloads modeled after telemetric data from around the world. You benefit from the assistive remediation and proactive support delivered by Pure1.

## Is Project Apex Really Future Proof?

Dell's new approach is really just putting its existing products on subscription. This means that whether a customer subscribes or purchases, they are still plagued by the same technical hurdles inherent in Dell's products. Sure, you may only pay for what you use (with significant minimum commitments), but when it comes time to refresh the hardware in that subscription, prepare for forced downtime. This could also be described as Headache-as-a-Service.

**Evergreen//One**, built on our Evergreen™ architecture, allows us to offer a seamless alternative to Dell's multiple refresh, expansion, and upgrade requirements that will require different sizes of forklifts depending on which service you subscribe to. Together, Pure as-a-Service deliver a scalable, elastic storage service designed to work similarly to a hyper-scaler model where the delivery of block, file, and object (necessary for cloud and edge-native applications) occurs on a foundation designed to ensure that as technology advances, the foundation adapts quickly and non-disruptively. That is the Modern Data Experience™ that we deliver today, not sometime next year. While Dell considers getting into the cloud storage arena, Pure is thinking ahead to [what your multicloud needs will be for the next 10 years](#) and how

we can maximize your value compared to spending more on a lease.

## What's the Real Cost of Project Apex?

Time will tell. But with Dell Financial Services involved, customer accounting groups may struggle to recognize service costs as OPEX for contracts exceeding 12 months since leasing structures require identified assets and OPEX structures exclude identified assets.

**Evergreen//One** is unique in that it's designed to provide flexibility with contract terms and minimum commitments that support your business objectives. It's available today, and most important, it's not a *products-on-subscription* approach so there is no portfolio overlap or difference in pricing structures based on identified assets. Designed, as a true OPEX model, with no leasing organizations involved, Evergreen//One meets the International Accounting and Financial Accounting Standards Board's definition of OPEX.

## What about Partners?

This is where the future is uncertain. Once a partner moves a customer to Dell's Project Apex, they transition not only the workloads but also the customer. Under these conditions, the customer's as-a-service relationship will be with Dell, independent of the partner. Where today Dell has special incentives for its partners to promote its Flex On Demand offering, in the new Dell subscription model it would make sense that promoting and gaining traction quickly would mean similar incentives would go directly to the customer. Why not, if Dell's customers are managing their multi-cloud experience on the Dell Technologies Cloud Console, there will be a significantly weakened channel-partner value proposition delivered. This will likely result in channel confusion and/or turmoil—not to mention reduced availability of value-add services that enterprises regularly gain from their partners.

**Evergreen//One** is designed to be partner-friendly, which makes sense given that Pure operates as a partner-only company. Regardless of how business is transacted at Pure, our partners participate. When it comes to Evergreen//One, our partners don't have to worry about losing customer relationships or being locked out of an opportunity to add the value and services that enterprises expect. Any vendor that willingly cannibalizes its partners by setting up a program that fosters direct deals is just chumming the waters to feed on itself.

## Final Thoughts

The quick take from the market is that the only unifying mechanism coming out of this announcement seems to be Dell Financial Services putting as much as possible into one lease. That is a vendor benefit, not a value add for customers. The "products on subscription" approach comes from a portfolio built via acquisition and managed as silos for years. As VP of FlashArray Product Marketing and the author of this article, I remain skeptical that a unified and seamless management experience is achievable for them. If so, Dell likely would have already done it.

I am proud to work in a company that was built on a single operating environment and a single design-theory foundation. That foundation is what creates a unified, seamless, and intuitive management experience capable of multi-generational non-disruptive upgrades for our hardware and software, regardless of how you chose to consume it. And our customers have already been consuming it as a service for years. Welcome to the party, Dell.

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[2] OPEX treatment is subject to customer's auditor review.

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<https://www.networkworld.com/article/3586634/dell-launches-apex-a-per-use-hardware-leasing-program.html>