

Hitachi Pivots to Industrial IoT: Should HDS Customers Be Concerned?

This week at NEXT 2017, Hitachi revealed its much anticipated major announcement - Hitachi Vantara. Vantara is a new subsidiary of Hitachi, Ltd. which brings together Hitachi Data Systems (HDS), Hitachi Insights Group (HIG), and Pentaho. [In Hitachi terms](#), Vantara is the culmination of Hitachi, Ltd.'s long history in Operational Technology and, combined with Information Technology expertise and data integration capabilities, enables a massive corporate pivot to Industrial IoT (IIoT). Hitachi has now positioned itself to compete with operational technology companies like GE and its Predix IoT platform.

Aligned with this shift, Hitachi rolled out its [Smart Data Center](#) solution and made several new product announcements, including [Lumada v2.0](#), [Hitachi IoT Appliance](#), [Hitachi Enterprise Cloud](#), and [Next-Gen Software and Converged Infrastructure Systems](#). Hitachi also announced the new [Unified Compute Platform HC \(UCP HC\) system](#). UCP HC is a hyper-converged system with the core storage technology [powered by VMware vSAN](#).

While these announcements are great news for potential IIoT buyers and hyperconverged systems' buyers, we can't help but wonder what it means for loyal buyers of HDS' storage arrays. As part of its announcement, [Hitachi stated that it will continue to develop data management and analytics technologies including Hitachi's data infrastructure, storage and compute solutions](#), but equally (if not more) important is what Hitachi did not announce. Missing from this list of NEXT 2017 announcements were any new flash storage array offerings in the VSP storage family.

This, despite Hitachi's [publicly stated commitment](#) to enable the transformation of customers' digital businesses via application acceleration and agility with a strong emphasis on flash storage technology. The absence of any new news on VSP flash storage is particularly surprising given media report of HDS's [HFS A series](#) withdrawal less than a year ago; HFS was meant to provide an economical alternative to its proprietary (and expensive) Flash Module Drives (FMDs) in the all-flash VSP F series storage arrays.

From our perspective it would appear that Hitachi is focusing their go-forward investments on IIoT and Social Innovation, leaving storage array innovation to be, at best, a back-seat affair.

And, when combined with the sheer degree of change (likely more to come, including product priority and resource shifts, attrition, stalled IT innovation, etc.) and uncertainty that typically follow a large-scale corporate-wide pivot, we expect HDS customers may be concerned about what the future holds - and wondering what they can do about it.

Implications for HDS Customers

An unfortunate but all too common effect of large corporate pivots such as this is under-investment and reduced innovation in once-leading, but no longer strategic, product platforms.

Consider the following data points...

- The reported retirement of the HFS A series raises doubt as to Hitachi's ability to innovate all-flash array products beyond the all-FMD retrofit VSP F series storage arrays
- The existing VSP storage array family and, in particular, the VSP F series all-flash storage arrays, are aging (the [first VSP G series product - the G1000 - was announced in April 2014](#) and new software updates and the VSP G1500 and F1500 were announced in October 2016). As yet to Pure's knowledge, there have been no announcements from Hitachi of a next generation VSP nor of NVMe support as bulk storage media for the VSP family. While Hitachi Vantara [UCP HC V120F supports NVMe SSDs as the cache layer](#), and Hitachi Vantara has published blogs on NVMe, support for NVMe as the bulk storage media in VSP F series arrays remains a future item when "price, performance, and maturity of NVMe stabilize", according to a Hitachi Vantara blog. (In contrast, Pure Storage has been innovating rapidly across block, file and object storage arrays: FlashArray//M was introduced in June 2015; FlashBlade™ announced in June 2016; new FlashArray//M controllers and new software features rolled out in October 2016; new all-NVMe FlashArray//X announced in April 2017; and major software announcements across FlashArray and FlashBlade in June 2017.)

So, what should HDS VSP storage array customers and prospective buyers do?

Pure Can Help

We recognize that HDS VSP storage array customers need to absorb the news and seek out clarifications and answers from Hitachi Vantara about the implications of this corporate pivot to future innovation (or potential lack thereof and the implied investment protection) on Hitachi's all-flash storage array products. At Pure, we are committed to innovation, investment protection, and customer delight. We are happy to chat with you about how we can help.

Hitachi storage arrays are known for rock-solid reliability, and Pure can help you maintain similar Tier 1 reliability. We take reliability incredibly seriously, and our FlashArray offers measured 6 9's availability, inclusive even of generational upgrades; full performance during maintenance and failures; and stretched cluster for business continuity with zero complexity, to name just a few of the many reliability features that are built-in.

And, this reliability comes with the innovation that's needed in the cloud era, including radical simplicity, efficiency, and rapid access to continuous innovation (such as NVMe and direct access to flash) via our Evergreen™ subscriptions.

Finally, as we alluded to earlier, our customers are some of the most satisfied (and happiest) in all of B2B tech. Pure Storage has a Satmetrix-certified Net Promoter Score of 83.7 - the top 1% in global B2B and 2-4X higher than legacy storage vendors. For those not familiar with NPS, it's a score from -100 to +100, so our +83.7 is a resounding A+.

Closing Thoughts

As an HDS VSP storage array customer, you have a lot on your mind. Your storage vendor's parent company (Hitachi) has announced a company-wide pivot to IIoT, and there were no new public all-flash announcements for the VSP storage array family. The silence on the latter, and the sheer change that the former entails, leads to a lot of uncertainty and potential risk for you. We can help. With the Pure Storage FlashArray, you can get the rock-solid reliability that you love, and get rapid access to a lot more easy-to-consume innovation (like our NVMe-enabled DirectFlash™). You can also make it your last migration with our Evergreen Storage ownership model. [Contact us](#) and we would love to chat.