

In the AI everywhere era, IT decision-makers are increasingly expanding the conversation beyond technical capabilities to encompass assured business outcomes, where service-level agreements are key.

# SLAs Raise Expectations on Business Outcomes and Investment Protection for Storage Solutions

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## Introduction

Mission-critical and essential business applications demand highly performant and resilient infrastructure to serve the demands of the business. At the same time, executives state that outdated infrastructure limits their ability to move forward with advanced initiatives, including AI and generative AI (GenAI) plans (source: IDC's *Future of Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 3, April 2025*).

CIOs and datacenter managers must balance investment priorities for modernized and AI-ready infrastructure with concerns for managing technical debt and increased cyber-resiliency risks and ensuring teams have the right IT skills and capabilities to manage modernized environments. In addition, CFOs are under increased pressure to drive return on investment (ROI) in an uncertain macroeconomic and microeconomic environment.

Along with these challenges, there are increased mandates for sustainability, including ensuring the energy performance of new IT investments is meeting more stringent consumption targets, which is quickly becoming a C-suite imperative.

In the AI everywhere era, IT decision-makers are increasingly expanding the conversation beyond technical capabilities to encompass assured business outcomes. Once companies align stakeholders (not an easy task in itself) and define a consensus of business objectives, they can begin to design a technology road map with these business imperatives in mind. The architectural approach must ensure a modernized infrastructure that meets key operational and technology objectives, which include an infrastructure that is secure, resilient, and operationally optimized (including new operational processes and requisite onboarding and training) and meets sustainability standards and metrics.

## AT A GLANCE

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- » Datacenter storage-performance guarantees help organizations de-risk IT environments and reduce total cost of ownership while adopting advanced datacenter storage architectures that offer flexibility in meeting future performance and scalability needs.
- » It is important to consider how an offering's architecture combined with SLA guarantees can deliver business case benefits across workload and energy efficiency, cyber-resiliency, data availability, and nondisruptive refreshes.

Embedded in these requirements, IT and business leaders increasingly seek service-level agreements (SLAs) and guarantees that address the organization more holistically, covering business, technical, and operational outcomes. Vendors and their partners can design offers that can meet these needs.

### **Resiliency and Security**

Ransomware recovery is a critical capability of datacenter storage solutions. Native ransomware detection and recovery capabilities help ensure the ability to swiftly identify and mitigate threats. Detecting anomalies indicative of malicious encryption at the array level can help identify ransomware attacks early. Recovery from immutable snapshots ensures that companies can restore data to a preattack state, minimizing loss and downtime. In addition, inline, real-time detection during replication at the VM layer enhances a system's ability to thwart ransomware attempts. Implementing a cyber-resilience workflow that aligns with the NIST framework strengthens the overall security posture, providing a structured approach to managing and recovering from cyberthreats.

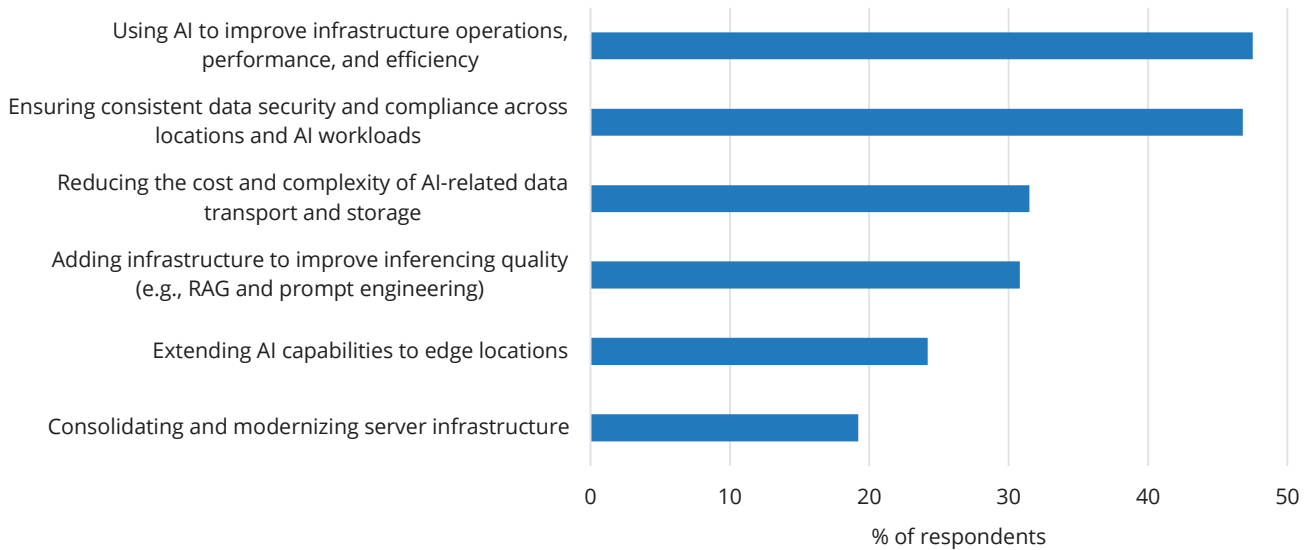
Defining an organization's recovery priorities is an essential step for strategic architectural design. IT stakeholders must define acceptable recovery time objectives (RTOs) and recovery point objectives (RPOs) at the workload and application levels. Collaborating to set realistic, achievable targets for RTO and RPO is important for balancing performance and cost-effectiveness. Having a vendor support these objectives can significantly reduce friction in internal IT operations processes.

### **Workload and Infrastructure Optimization**

According to IDC's March 2025 *Future of Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey*, 48% of organizations stated that optimizing compute, storage, network, and cloud resources is a top area of focus for technology investments. Digging deeper into their infrastructure priorities, these same respondents stated their primary goals are to ensure consistent data security and compliance across all locations and workloads, use AI to improve infrastructure operations, and reduce the cost of data transport and storage (see Figure 1). As this survey highlights, storage performance, efficacy, security, and availability are core tenets for the future success of an organization's storage infrastructure strategy.

FIGURE 1: **Storage Performance, Efficacy, Security, and Cost Are Infrastructure Priorities**

**Q You indicated that you are prioritizing AI infrastructure readiness in 2025. What is your most important goal for these efforts? What is your second most important goal?**



*n* = 424

Source: IDC's Future of Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 1, February 2025

### Ownership Expenses

Given today's geopolitical and economic uncertainties, it is no surprise that managing expenses across the IT landscape will become more important and face more scrutiny. IT decision-makers now have various tools and resources to help them make informed decisions to help ensure cost predictability. To mitigate costs, organizations can take several steps, including conducting thorough risk assessments on critical infrastructure to help prioritize upgrading and replacing end-of-life and end-of-support products that could expose the business to risk, negotiating multiyear contracts, and incorporating clear SLAs that include uptime guarantees that minimize disruption.

### Sustainability/Energy Consumption

As the demand for high-performance compute, storage, and networking continues to grow, the IT industry faces increasing challenges related to resource scarcity and rising costs. According to IDC's March 2024 *Datacenter Operations and Sustainability Survey*, both enterprise and service provider (SP) datacenter managers indicated that sustainability is a top 3 initiative and expect it to remain a priority in the coming years. In this context, energy-efficient datacenter storage technologies, including AIOps management capabilities, are important tools for IT decision-makers. These technologies help mitigate resource constraints and enable more ambitious cost management and sustainability goals.

## Definitions

SLAs are formal contracts between service providers and customers that define the expected level of service, performance metrics, and responsibilities. When evaluating vendor offerings, SLAs serve as a critical component of datacenter storage decision-making for addressing risk. SLAs typically include definitions of the following terms:

- » **KPIs** for the specific service to measure the SLA guarantees, such as uptime, resiliency, or energy consumption
- » **Monitoring** to ensure compliance with SLAs, including continuous observation of service metrics and alerts for deviations from agreed standards
- » **Roles and responsibilities**, which for the service provider include ensuring service delivery, maintaining infrastructure, and providing support
- » **Response and resolution time**, which specifies the time frames within which the service provider must respond to and resolve issues to restore service
- » **Compensations**, which are predefined remedies in the case that the service does not meet the SLA-defined service metrics and may include service credits, monetary compensation, and contractual remedies

SLAs are essential for ensuring that both parties clearly understand the service expectations and obligations, fostering a reliable and productive business relationship.

SLAs are especially important in competitive markets with fast rates of technological change. They establish trust, mitigate risk, set clear expectations, and reinforce continuous improvement. SLAs also serve as a competitive advantage for a vendor, demonstrating — and contractually backing up — a commitment to the identified KPIs and business outcomes.

By continuing to build a more comprehensive set of SLAs, datacenter storage vendors meet IT leaders' need to address additional risks inherent in business operations. While SLAs are typical for ensuring reliability and resiliency, they are increasingly pushing the envelope by backing innovative features that deliver value to customers, including sustainability (power consumption), cyber-resiliency, and workload or capacity management for the datacenter storage offering.

## Benefits

As enterprises evaluate technology partners that support their strategic initiatives, decision-makers are evaluating technology road maps with an eye on improving the total cost of ownership (TCO). IDC research shows that the top benefits of SLAs include reducing operational and energy costs, simplifying management with better insights and visibility, and protecting data more effectively.

SLAs are a key component of baking in those services for storage solutions. IT decision-makers can expect to look for SLAs that reduce the risk of not achieving benefits in the following categories:

- » TCO
- » IT skills and efficiency
- » Security and availability

- » Tech refresh and reducing the risk of tech debt by design

Partners that provide holistic storage offerings that deliver performance, flexibility, and agility, coupled with the right economics, will help organizations extract maximum value from their storage investments.

## Trends

Data accessibility and security will be a core component of any future IT initiative and become even more important as business-critical workloads place more pressure on the underlying infrastructure. However, due to the complexity of IT in operational processes, limited skills, talent shortages, and increasing costs, it will be imperative that organizations leverage all resources available to them to mitigate any potential risks, or they could suffer expensive consequences.

According to IDC's *Cost of Downtime Study*:

- » 43% of organizations stated that both on-premises and public cloud infrastructure require additional measures to improve workload resiliency/redundancy.
- » 54.8% stated they would purchase more advanced support contracts to provide more services and increase availability. This is up 8.3% from 2020.
- » Organizations cited spending 94 hours on storage issues/upgrades/maintenance that cost them \$1,337/hour, equating to \$127,188/year in extra costs.

SLAs can provide operational peace of mind and the ability to offload operational tasks to vendors with expertise; they also are a key driver of flexible consumption buying decisions. IDC research shows that the following are key challenges IT leaders seek to solve when investing in deploying flexible consumption models of datacenter storage:

- » 36% said IT skills challenges were a top challenge that a vendor's flexible consumption offerings help solve.
- » 31% cited performance and availability challenges.
- » 28% cited reducing overprovisioning.

IDC observes that datacenter storage vendors continue to advance what they guarantee with SLAs. They are also working to provide consistency across capital and operational expenditures (including flexible consumption). This is a welcome advancement in product packaging for datacenter owners and operators that are operating in a sea of complex architectures as they seek to make progress on their storage strategies.

## Considering the HPE Storage Future-Ready Program

The HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000 datacenter storage solution is designed to meet the demands of modern enterprises, offering high-speed data access and robust scalability. It helps organizations lower TCO, improve ROI, mitigate risk, and boost efficiency with a unified, disaggregated scale-out architecture and an AIOps-powered operational experience. The offering leverages AMD EPYC Embedded processors to enhance performance and provide efficient data processing capabilities that are crucial for handling large-scale workloads. The integration of AMD EPYC Embedded processors ensures that the B10000 can deliver the computational power necessary for environments that require rapid data retrieval and processing. The B10000 is part of HPE's strategic focus on delivering advanced storage solutions that cater to businesses' evolving needs, particularly in sectors that demand high-performance computing. (For more in-depth

coverage of the HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000 offering, see *Growth of Data-Intensive Workloads Drives New and Enhanced Scale-Out, Software-Defined Storage* [IDC #US52853724, December 2024].) The HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000's suite of SLAs and guarantees brings a robust backing to HPE's datacenter storage solutions. The recently launched HPE Storage Future-Ready program helps optimize IT outcomes through improved efficiency, reduced TCO, guaranteed data availability, cyber-resilience, sustainability, and investment protection.

### **Lowering TCO and Increasing Efficiency**

To combat legacy infrastructure limitations, HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000 offers a disaggregated unified block and file storage platform, lowering TCO by up to 40%, according to HPE. HPE has also introduced several SLAs and guarantees to maximize efficiency by improving resource utilization and data management and lowering power consumption:

- » **Workload optimization:** The platform leverages AIOps to improve operational processes and accelerate provisioning for operational savings while delivering predictive analytics and insights, reducing the need for added support. Potential business benefits encompass operational savings, preventing disruptions, faster troubleshooting of performance issues, and reducing storage admin hours.
- » **HPE StoreMore Guarantee:** Driven by advanced data compression technology, the B10000 offers a data reduction savings guarantee of at least 4:1, according to HPE, meaning customers can store more data for less cost.
- » **HPE Energy Consumption Guarantee:** The B10000 offering features a power-efficient architecture that reduces footprint, energy consumption, and e-waste and optimizes operational efficiency. HPE's Energy Consumption Guarantee for the B10000 promises that energy consumption will not exceed an agreed-upon threshold each month.

### **Always-On Data, Resiliency, and Security**

As a result of ever-increasing cyberthreats, HPE has a set of SLAs and guarantees that aim to provide robust ransomware recovery and high availability to protect against the risk of downtime and ransomware attacks:

- » **HPE Cyber Resiliency Guarantee:** In the event of a ransomware incident, HPE Support will connect the customer to an outage specialist within 30 minutes of reporting the issue. It assures that all immutable snapshots that the customer created on the B10000 will remain accessible for the specified retention period.
- » **100% data availability guarantee:** The B10000 leverages an AI-driven, disaggregated, no-single-point-of-failure platform to deliver resilient 100% data availability for every customer and array.
- » **HPE Zero RTO/RPO Guarantee:** This provides business continuity with zero RPO/RTO through Active Peer Persistence, enabling synchronous replication between storage arrays. In the event of a failover, the secondary array can seamlessly take over without any data loss for applications or downtime, maintaining operational continuity.

### Future-Proof Infrastructure and Investment

Tech refreshes are costly, time-consuming, and pose risks to data during downtime. HPE has a robust set of SLAs that provide future-proof storage investment:

- » **HPE Controller Refresh Program:** This program keeps storage continuously up to date with a free nondisruptive controller refresh. This reduces TCO and can save an average of 30% compared with traditional forklift upgrades, according to HPE. This allows customers to more easily and cost effectively modernize and scale as needed, without the need for rip-and-replace upgrades, complex data migration, or costly media rebuys.
- » **All-inclusive software subscription:** The subscription includes every feature, update, and enhancement without extra hidden fees.

HPE also offers a satisfaction guarantee period of 30 days. If the B10000 does not deliver the benefits and capabilities as described in the product specifications, HPE says it will make things right.

IT decision-makers will be interested in the business case benefits achievable through the combination of the HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000's architecture and the SLAs and guarantees in the HPE Storage Future-Ready Program to ensure data availability, workload optimization, energy efficiency, cyber-resilience, reduced TCO, and investment protection.

### Challenges

SLAs provide assurance against business risk and educate potential buyers with data and insights. With the advanced HPE Alletra Storage MP architecture, which is designed to enable customers to scale performance and capacity independently, and HPE's AIOps-powered operational capabilities, SLAs serve an important signaling function.

To provide strength to the signal, it will be important for HPE to publish proven field results, including sharing verified customer case studies and references of how the company delivered on the SLAs even when customers exceeded the thresholds and how the SLAs met technology and operational priorities, even under demanding conditions. On the customer side, IT leaders will want to train their teams so they are familiar and comfortable with the monitoring and management functions, as well as the data reported.

For HPE, it will also be important to keep innovating and raising the bar by delivering new SLAs for its datacenter storage offerings. SLAs help prove differentiation, especially in the market for on-premises unified block and file storage systems.

### Conclusion

SLAs serve as a strategic tool for IT decision-makers to navigate the complexities of modern storage infrastructure while driving innovation and achieving desired business outcomes. They also provide investment protection in the face of technical debt and increased cyber-resiliency risks. By offering comprehensive SLAs and continuing to push the boundaries on the KPIs that they can guarantee, vendors can address the evolving needs of IT leaders, ensuring energy efficiency and robust data protection.

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## About the Analysts



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Lara Greden leads IDC's worldwide research on IT infrastructure as-a-Service (IaaS) solutions, flexible consumption models, leasing markets, and circular economy sustainability strategies. Her analysis provides insight from both a supply-side and a buyers point of view, with core research coverage including circular economy and sustainability for IT assets and the evolution of procurement strategies for better operating models from purchasing, leasing, and financing to as-a-service models, also known as flexible consumption.



***Leslie Rosenberg, Research Vice President, Network Life-Cycle Services and Infrastructure Services***

Leslie Rosenberg is research vice president for IDC's Network Life-Cycle and Infrastructure Services programs examining professional services trends and market dynamics for the enterprise. Ms. Rosenberg's research coverage spans life-cycle services portfolio development across network, server, and storage infrastructure technologies encompassing the dynamics of software-defined infrastructure, automation, service delivery platforms, new consumption models, and the evolution of services impacting people, process, tools, and methodologies around the globe.

## MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Today's enterprise storage customers demand more than just technology; they seek assured IT outcomes. HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000 meets this requirement head-on with an AIOps-powered operational experience and disaggregated architecture that lowers TCO, improves ROI, mitigates risk, and boosts efficiency.

HPE stands behind these promises with the HPE Storage Future-Ready Program, which delivers outcome-focused SLAs and commitments that include free nondisruptive controller upgrades, all-inclusive software, and guarantees for 100% data availability, storage efficiency, cyber resiliency, zero downtime, energy efficiency and customer satisfaction.

The HPE Storage Future-Ready Program provides peace of mind so you can focus on business objectives rather than IT operations. Your storage stays modern, your costs stay predictable, and your business stays ahead-today and tomorrow.

Find out more:

- » [HPE Storage Future-Ready Program](#)
- » [HPE Alletra Storage MP B10000](#)



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