2024-25 **DCIG** TOP 5
ENTERPRISE MULTI-SITE FILE COLLABORATION
Panzura Solution Profile

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Enterprise Multi-site File Collaboration—Panzura Solution Profile

SOLUTION

Panzura CloudFS

COMPANY

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DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF PANZURA

- Intelligent caching and synchronization
- File and byte-range locking
- Panzura Edge

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF TOP 5 SOLUTIONS

- Multi-cloud support
- Wide use case support
- Robust technical support
- Data security features
- VMware deployments

SOLUTION FEATURES EVALUATED

- *Deployment Capabilities*
- *Data Protection and Security Capabilities*
- *Product and Performance Management Features*
- *File Collaboration Capabilities*
- *Technical Support*
- *Licensing and Pricing*

File Collaboration Challenges for Distributed Workforces

Many organizations rely on effective file-based collaboration for core business processes. This worked well when employees sat in offices with fast links to local file servers or network-attached storage (NAS) systems. However, for many organizations today, the workforce now spans the globe.

Consider that before the pandemic, an estimated 5.7% of working Americans worked remotely at home. That percentage grew by nearly 18% in two years.[1] This excludes the 28% of hybrid employees that split their working time between home and office[2] as well as remote workers located around the world.

All this to say, is that today's modern workforce spreads between office, home, mobile, and abroad. And when this dispersed workforce needs to work collaboratively on files using legacy systems, the result is frustration, lost time, lost money, and increased organizational risk. Given the competitive pressures any organization faces, implementing solutions that speed collaborative digital production brings multiple benefits.

The challenges around effective file collaboration using legacy systems include:

Limited scalability. Many legacy systems lack scalability to meet current and emerging enterprise capacity and performance requirements. As remote teams grow, on-premises NAS systems may struggle to meet the increased demand for remote file sharing and collaboration.

Version control. When a distributed organization lacks an effective file collaboration solution, troubles occur. An employee realizes they are working on the wrong version of a file. Or worse, they discover this after they have sent an incorrect version to a client. Team members lose time when they must compare versions to find and understand differences between two possible documents. Then, users must spend cycles to resolve and merge different versions into the correct one.

Unmanageable file data growth. Information Technology departments face a continuous increase in the amount of unstructured data they must try to manage. End-users and IT staff members often hesitate to delete files because they fear accidentally deleting something important or necessary. These dynamics contribute to file clutter and dramatically increase storage volumes. And since organizations must protect the data they store, backup and archive storage grow alongside their primary file storage.

Sharing files and folders. Sharing files and folders for collaborative work brings its own concerns. Legacy systems frequently depend on on-premises file storage, making file access challenging for remote workers. Sending files through email presents security risks, delivery failures, and out-of-date files floating around. If a team uses email to send documents, they must spend time messaging, making changes, then emailing files back. Enterprises can create VPNs or other shares for outside partners; however, this frequently involves manual activity and possible mistakes.

Data security and control. Traditional file-sharing approaches often lack security and compliance features. This lack can be a significant concern when collaboration involves sensitive information. Employee negligence, poor security, or compromised end points and storage media can result in data breaches. A single breach or attack can devastate a business and its reputation. Thus, the IT department needs better monitoring, control and visibility into the file data than is provided by many legacy systems.

Handling large files. Whereas a traditional local NAS infrastructure may handle large files with ease, this becomes problematic when sharing large files across the wide area network (WAN). File-sharing can become slow or even impossible when distributed teams are involved. And end-users must completely rule out emailing large files for collaborative work. These challenges slow or even stop workflows necessary for digital production teams.

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Latency. Centralizing file storage, whether on-premises or in the cloud, opens possibilities for multi-site file collaboration but also obstacles. WAN transfer speeds, mobile access, and competition with other applications over the WAN link can result in latency problems that make collaborative work tedious and time-consuming. For files hosted on-premises, a slow user experience is typical for anyone except those local to the hosted files.

Frustrations, costs, and risks. Organizations lose time and money because of the problems above. Additionally, legacy approaches do not provide opportunities for enterprise-wide automation for efficiency benefits. These issues lower productivity, increase costs, and elevate risks to data security, revenue, and brand reputation.

SDS-based File Collaboration Benefits

Along with the change to a distributed workforce, organizations are integrating software-defined storage (SDS) solutions into their storage infrastructure for the increased flexibility, agility, and capabilities these software products offer. Many SDS-based file-storage solutions include features that enhance multi-site file collaboration and bring multiple benefits.

Scalability. As an organization grows over time, these file storage solutions allow IT departments to easily accommodate adding users, capacity, and collaboration services. The best software products provide consistent performance while scaling.

Version control. As a notable feature, these solutions help manage, track, and retain changes to files over time. Users can roll back to an earlier file version when mistakes are made or when an earlier version of the file is preferred. These solutions often provide audit trails that present all interactions with a file for compliance and security.

Modern file collaboration. These software products support file and folder sharing with internal and external stakeholders outside the organization. The degree of access can be customized based on need. Changes to collaborators' files are automatically updated to the authoritative source wherever located. To speed synchronization, only the portions of a file that have changed are transmitted across the network. One common feature of these solutions is their ability to handle large files smoothly.

Increased storage efficiency. By centralizing shared files and implementing effective version controls, companies realize savings on file storage. Many offerings also utilize compression and deduplication for more efficient storage and reduced data transmission. Thus, organizations save file storage costs and reduce WAN bandwidth needs.

Public cloud integration. SDS solutions commonly integrate with public cloud services. This opens opportunities for public cloud or hybrid cloud deployments. Organizations can leverage public cloud storage for archiving, backup, or hosting files for collaboration. Plus, public cloud providers offer a number of features for securing and protecting data from cyberattacks and unforeseen events.

Data protection, security, and control. With these products, IT administrators can holistically manage shared file data. IT departments experience control through their ability to assign file permission attributes at a granular level, leverage data security features to protect data from unauthorized access, and place data where it needs to be for data sovereignty reasons.

Fast file access. Frequently, these software products integrate technologies that provide fast access to active files for distributed teams and remote end users. For example, while the authoritative file may be stored in a private or public cloud, active data is cached locally for each office or end user. This speeds up performance and overcomes WAN latency issues when users or applications access data. File changes are updated on the back end and are invisible to the end-user. As a result, all users have a near-immediate view of file updates, contributing to a positive end-user experience.

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Automation. These file collaboration solutions provide automation features that save time and speed digital production. Many solutions support APIs that allow organizations to integrate file workflows with other software applications. Organizations can automate and orchestrate complex collaborative processes that otherwise would be error-prone manual endeavors. Automation saves organizations time and money and increases revenues by speeding up workflows.

In summary, these solutions speed file collaboration, improve end-user experiences, strengthen security, and reduce organizational storage needs. Ultimately, capabilities like these are essential for increasing the quality and speed at which organizations can produce digital assets for their internal and external stakeholders.

Distinguishing Features of DCIG TOP 5 Enterprise Multi-site File Collaboration Solutions

The *2024-25 DCIG TOP 5 Enterprise Multi-site File Collaboration Solutions* report is an outcome of DCIG's research into the marketplace for software-defined storage (SDS) for file storage. Most solutions DCIG evaluated in this body of research reflect characteristic properties of SDS solutions. A deeper dive shows that a few reflect some, but not all, characteristics of SDS. These few do, however, offer notable file collaboration capabilities. In total, DCIG evaluated twenty-six solutions characterized as file collaboration solutions or software-defined storage solutions for file storage.

Using feature-based analysis and comparisons of data derived from publicly available sources, vendors, and DCIG's own experience, the solutions featured in the *2024-25 DCIG TOP 5 Enterprise Multi-site File Collaboration Solutions* report share these characteristics that distinguish them from the other solutions DCIG evaluated.

Multi-cloud support. DCIG TOP 5 solutions evidence rich support for multi-cloud deployments and storage. All of these solutions support the major cloud providers, such as Amazon, Microsoft, and Google, both for deployment as a VM and as a target for storage. Such broad support offers flexibility in matching a cloud provider's capabilities with the needs of the business.

Wide use case support. Each of the DCIG TOP 5 solutions supports a wide variety of use cases beyond just file collaboration. This means IT departments can meet the needs of multiple applications or departments with a single file storage solution. Such wide use case support also enables organizations to leverage these storage solutions ongoing as business needs evolve.

Robust technical support. DCIG TOP 5 providers display robust support capabilities compared to the other evaluated solutions. All DCIG TOP 5 vendors provide 24x7x365 availability for trouble resolution, compared to 57% of the other solutions DCIG assessed. Each DCIG TOP 5 provider offers at least four-hour response times to reported troubles, with most offering one-hour response times or better for mission-critical issues. Administrators can utilize a knowledge base for online self-support, and all winners provide the opportunity for an assigned account manager.

Data security features. While cybersecurity software is the first line of defense against viruses and malware, DCIG TOP 5 winners offer many additional security features that help protect data from bad actors. For example, all winners offer both in-flight and at-rest encryption, Role Based Access Controls (RBAC) that limit access and permissions to users, Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) that requires two or more forms of authentication before granting access to data or systems, and file auditing and analytics tools that help identify security risks.

VMware deployments. All DCIG TOP 5 solutions support VMware VM deployments. This allows organizations to leverage the enhanced capabilities these SDS solutions offer with their existing VMware environment.

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Panzura CloudFS

Upon DCIG's completion of reviewing multiple, available providers of SDS products, DCIG ranked Panzura as a DCIG TOP 5 provider. Panzura CloudFS simplifies the management of unstructured data and files for complex enterprises. Panzura does this through patented (37+ patents and counting) cloud-native technology that supports both on-premises and hybrid cloud use. With CloudFS, enterprises leverage a single, authoritative data set held in a private or public cloud and organized into a global file system. A global namespace provides a unified view of these file resources for locations and users around the globe. The result is a centralized file services platform well-suited for cloud-based NAS consolidation, global file collaboration, active archiving, and disaster recovery across unlimited locations.

Notable features that helped earn Panzura a DCIG TOP 5 award for multi-site file collaboration include:

Intelligent caching and synchronization. Local Panzura nodes deliver fast file access through intelligently cached data. Each node supplies local caching and access for the unique users and workloads, providing the flexibility of a multi-location organization without the standalone storage silos. Enterprises deploy Panzura nodes as virtual machines on the hypervisor of choice with the ability to scale up to and beyond 100 nodes. To reduce the total storage footprint and file transfer times, Panzura deduplicates and compresses stored data and only transmits the deltas to cloud storage, even as data is being synchronized across the enterprise. The low latent synchronization means that at every 60-second interval, CloudFS synchronizes globally, across all Panzura nodes, new and changed data and metadata.

File and byte-range locking. Panzura has developed its own locking systems to ensure conflict-free file collaboration. Organizations can utilize global write locking to prevent more than one user from opening a file and making modifications. Panzura also offers byte range locking for applications that support it, where teams can work on the same file simultaneously. Both lock types can be used across the cloud network across any number of locations. For file collaboration, Panzura exchanges data yet to be sent to the cloud through peer-to-peer communication to ensure real-time updates occur.

Panzura Edge. Panzura Edge natively integrates with Panzura CloudFS to add enterprise file sync and share to an organization's file services. It provides real-time file access for end-users and third-party collaborators on Android, iOS, Windows, macOS, and web-based clients without needing a VPN. Intelligent bandwidth management speeds file access and minimizes latency. Policy-based controls restrict file and folder sharing to specific domains and other customizable controls. IT departments retain complete control of shared content through public or password-protected links for Active Directory and non-Active Directory users. These features enable an organization's workforce and partners to collaborate effectively from any device, anywhere. ■

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Sources referenced January 2024

1. https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2023-05-18/how-the-covid-pandemic-impacted-working-from-home
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