



Maintenance Perspectives
Ways to get more from your hardware agreements

Endangered Timberwolves

End of Service Life doesn't force you to rip and replace in the datacenter

May 17, 2011

Keep an eye out for typos.

Details are at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

Powderhorns, Timberwolves, and old timey hardware

May's full moon rises tonight, reminding us of the ever-present issue of what to do with hardware that the manufacturer has deemed end of life. The connection? Timberwolves!

STK's Timberwolf and Powderhorn lines stemmed from the products that rejuvenated the company after their bankruptcy issues in the mid 80s. In some measure the success of these products led to Sun taking an interest in, and eventually completing the acquisition of StorageTek in 2005. Sun itself was acquired by Oracle in 2010, bringing us to where we are today. The storage silo, robot arm contraptions may seem quaint to some, but in their heyday they really were a clever reinvention of storage in the image of a large-scale mainframe.

Tape by and large has migrated to virtual tape or even more advanced media, and the industry has continued to push the envelope, most notably through market frontrunners like EMC that pursue bigger, faster, cooler and more efficient hardware with powerful virtualization and storage management solutions. But until very recently, the old robot arms were still whirring in the powderhorns located in datacenters worldwide. Now, thanks to EOSL announcements, they have begun to disappear, despite coexisting quite comfortably with more advanced storage technologies until now. The only real change has been the EOSL statement, rather than a sharp change in technology. As a result, retaining an EOSL storage solution is still much cheaper and simpler for many companies than the labor, expense, and overall hassle of rapidly replacing one.

Managing the present rather than forcing the future

First, the products can't really keep up with more modern storage hardware solutions, on many fronts. They're not as fast, they're nowhere near as flexible, the management software is not as powerful and in terms of hard physics, they're not as efficient to power or to cool as the current iteration of storage hardware arrays, boxes and appliances.

But they are familiar, they are already deeply enmeshed in the datacenter, they are difficult to transition data out of, and they already are working, like they have been working, for years or even decades. While no longer so appropriate for high-intensity production situations, the primary issue isn't that they've suddenly gotten slower or hotter or become incompatible. The primary issue is support. Here's where third party maintainers can be of enormous value.

Though not all third party hardware maintainers are able to provide service on these storage units, those that do have access both to parts and qualified technicians enable you to decide what to keep and how long to keep it. For those looking to replace the EOSL models, a third party maintainer is a great way to ensure coverage during a transition, especially if the EOSL machines still house any primary storage. If you're still using the EOSL machines in a setting where they are perfectly adequate, a third party maintainer can ensure full SLA coverage at a reasonable price for as long as you have requirements, and then provide transition services when you need them at some future time. It's all well and good to choose when to transition, but it's never wise to force one, or to go into a rip and replace project feeling like your company had no other choice.

Free Maintenance Consultation

TERiX can save you the hassle and labor of a hasty rip and replace, easing a transition or supporting existing hardware two decades or longer past end of life if you should have the need. Click the appropriate links below to connect with a TERiX sales consultant. Let us know some [basic information](#) about your business and your datacenter locations, and we'll respond with relevant information so you can compare vendors and capabilities to meet your specific requirements. [Click through](#) to find out more!

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