



MARKET NOTE

Acronis Backup 12.5: Transforming Data Protection with Blockchain Tech, Ransomware Protection, and Quick Insights

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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Acronis Backup 12.5: Transforming Data Protection

Acronis has released an updated data protection solution – Acronis Backup 12.5 (Standard and Advanced editions), aimed at helping users consolidate the management and protection of data regardless of its physical location or workload type.

Key Takeaways

- Acronis Backup 12.5 is a significant release for the vendor as it packs over 170 new features and enhancements to make its data protection and backup capabilities relevant in the modern, heterogeneous, hybrid, and multicloud environments.
- The most notable features in Backup 12.5 include Acronis Notary, a blockchain-based solution to help ensure authenticity and integrity of data and backup. Another key feature is Active protection, which offers automated proactive protection of files and backups from ransomware.
- Acronis aims to make its solution a next-generation data protection product by adding a flexible consumption model and simple and customizable dashboard to enable collaboration and better user experiences, and implementing next-generation technologies such as blockchain.
- Acronis has been accelerating innovation on the product side and it now needs to educate its channel partners and small enterprises in Europe about the benefits of using its technologies. It is critical that partners and customers share its vision of next-generation data protection for its long-term future in Europe.

Source: IDC, 2017

IN THIS MARKET NOTE

In this Market Note IDC analyzes and reviews Acronis Backup 12.5, the latest backup solution release from vendor Acronis. IDC also assesses how the solution fits in the fast-changing data protection and backup market in Europe and the tough GDPR data protection regulation coming into effect in May 2018.

IDC'S POINT OF VIEW

Data protection needs are evolving rapidly. Today's enterprise infrastructure is characterized by multicloud, hybrid IT, heterogeneous infrastructure, demanding applications, multiple endpoint devices, huge volumes of data, and a changing threat landscape. To add to this, the imminent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is further toughening data compliance requirements and there is a pressing need to keep data and applications highly available and secure all the time for end users. This calls for a modern approach to backup and data protection and use of solutions that support multiple cloud platforms and virtual infrastructures, have automated capabilities and next-generation data protection features such as faster recovery, intelligent protection and restoration, quicker insights across infrastructure, easy-to-use dashboards, and flexible purchase options.

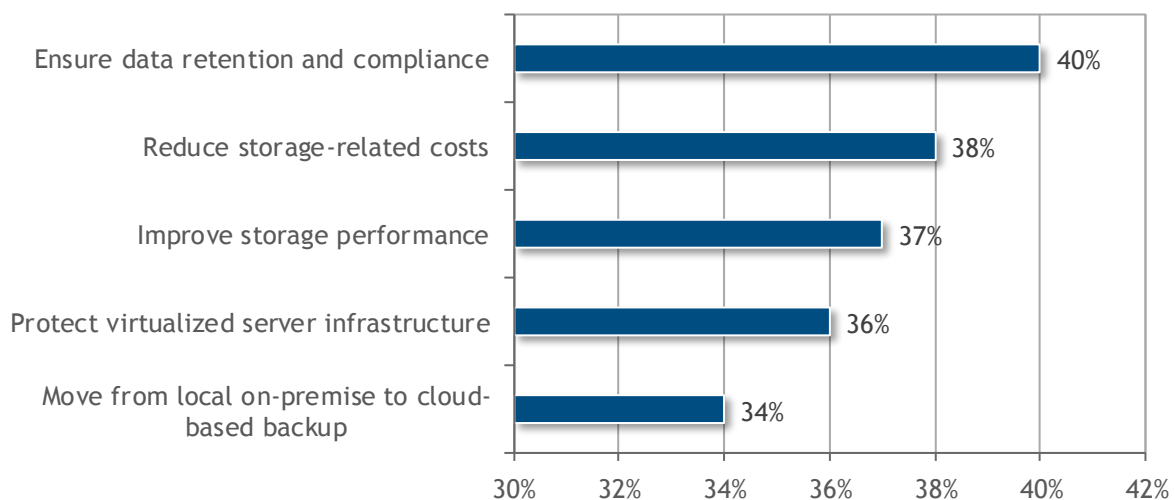
The need for a holistic data protection solution compatible with all workloads in all environments is much more pressing as data becomes widely dispersed across multiple on-premise datacenters, multiple cloud platforms, and SaaS applications.

IDC predicts that more than 70% of European enterprises will commit to multicloud and hybrid architectures by 2018, driving up the rate and pace of change in IT organizations. This means enterprises will need to break away from using separate, siloed backup and protection solutions for each environment.

FIGURE 1

Top Storage-Related Priorities for 2017 and Beyond

Q. Which of the following are your organization's top priorities relating to storage for the next 12 months?



Notes: n = 604

Source: IDC European infrastructure Survey, 2017

As European organizations execute on their digital transformation strategies, their storage priorities are focused on improving performance, ensuring compliance, and moving to cloud-based data protection and backup as they modernize their infrastructures (see Figure 1).

Respondents also said protecting data repositories as separate entities on each infrastructure using separate solutions is inefficient and prone to user error and cyberattacks. It also lacks holistic visibility to ensure compliance and identify issues, forcing enterprises to evaluate backup software and services solutions over siloed appliances.

The diversity of data, applications, and infrastructure is only going to get more challenging as IoT devices go mainstream. In our opinion, European enterprises need solutions that can help them centrally manage and protect data.

Acronis Backup 12.5

Data protection and storage vendor Acronis has released Acronis Backup 12.5 (Standard and Advanced editions), aimed at helping users consolidate the management and protection of data regardless of its physical location or application deployment model.

It has added 170 new features to the latest edition with emphasis on two key areas – user experience and security. Key enhancements include instant restore capabilities for 15-second RTOs, incremental recovery of virtual machines through a feature called vmFlashback, and a customizable dashboard so backup admins can get quick insights into their backup infrastructures.

The Advanced version includes additional enterprise features such as Oracle backup and recovery, bare metal recovery automation, SAN storage snapshots, and disaster recovery capabilities across 21 infrastructures and hypervisors including key platforms such as AWS, Azure, SoftLayer, VMware, Microsoft, Red Hat, Citrix, Oracle, mobile operating systems, and hosted environments.

IDC believes this is a significant release for the overall data protection market as it heralds a change in backup and data protection technologies, aiming it at the modern, heterogeneous enterprise IT environment.

IDC forecasts that the data protection and recovery software market – the biggest storage software market segment – will grow at a CAGR of 5.5% in Europe to 2021, reaching \$2.30 billion in constant currency. We also estimate that almost half of the market spend in 2017 and 2018 will be driven by GDPR with a substantial chunk of the market continuing to be driven by GDPR until 2021 as companies continue to update their data protection and compliance tools.

Acronis Backup 12.5 is game-changing for the vendor's future for three key reasons:

- **Focus on innovation.** Acronis, with its 200+ patents and 500+ engineers, has been at the forefront of innovation, be it the Universal Restore (recovery on any hypervisor or hardware) or full image backup on running systems. In 12.5, Acronis has added innovative technologies such as blockchain to ensure authenticity and integrity of data and backup. Blockchain is emerging as a promising technology to make data tamper-proof. Many financial services, manufacturing, and retail businesses are experimenting with blockchain to make transactions and secure assets in a fool-proof way. Acronis has adapted the distributed ledger technology and applied it to a key area – data protection and data management.
- **Focus on feature advancements.** Acronis' strengths lie in its wide vision of storage, security, and data protection in the context of a hybrid, multicloud world. The latest edition includes security-specific features such as Active Protection from ransomware attacks,

which focuses on proactive security. There is also backup of selective Microsoft Exchange mailboxes for additional data protection. Other key features include single-click bare-metal recovery, recovery automation, custom admin roles, scalability to 2,000 managed devices, and instant recovery. The advanced version also features Oracle database backup, advanced reporting, and variable block-sized deduplication. In IDC's opinion, these features are more attuned to the next-generation datacenter infrastructure which is characterized by hybrid environments, cloud services, changing security threats, and new technologies such as serverless technologies and more endpoint devices.

- **Focus on user experience.** Acronis 12.5 features a mobile-enabled web interface that can be deployed on-premise or in the cloud for unified, centralized data protection across hybrid infrastructure. Much of the feedback from beta users focuses on the simplicity of the customizable dashboard, quick insights across multiple infrastructures, and "three clicks backup." Another aspect is flexible pricing via licensing and subscriptions and upgrades. IDC believes that other new features such as off-host operations to free up production machine load, and single sign on for Windows, also improve user experiences.

Next-Gen Data Protection Features – Ransomware Protection, Blockchain-Based Data Verification, Simpler Interface

IDC sees the automated ransomware protection as a valuable addition especially to the many medium and small enterprises in Europe that have been affected by ransomware but do not have large, dedicated teams to keep track of all workstation backups. They can set it and have an automated ransomware protection operational full time to automatically restore damaged data. It automates encryption and deletion of unauthorized files, providing proactive security that is relevant in the dynamic IT environments of today.

Acronis Backup 12.5 also includes a blockchain technology feature – Acronis Notary – which helps ensure authenticity of data. Acronis Notary protects data using distributed ledger technology to provide complete auditability, prevents data from being erased, and provides a record of digital events across entities and participants.

IDC is intrigued by the application of blockchain technology in the field of data protection via Acronis Notary. In our opinion, federated application deployment models (many independent applications depending on different databases) will become more common, and Blockchain has the potential to become one method to provide transaction-level recovery across these independent applications. Blockchain, by its very nature, is immutable and tamper-proof, ensuring it complies with regulations and, in Notary's case, even ensuring validity of recovery.

The Road Ahead in Europe

In the light of GDPR, IDC expects the data protection market to remain an important investment area for European organizations for the next three years. Data protection, governance, and management are at the heart of storage investment in Europe for 2017 and beyond. IDC believes Acronis is well positioned to address modern enterprises' need to back up, protect, secure, and recover data across their multi-infrastructure environments. The engineering efforts to improve usability and implement advanced technologies such as blockchain establish Acronis as a credible, long-term vendor with significant competitive advantages.

But its key challenge remains the maturity of the data protection market, customer inertia to innovate on backup, the wide installed base of competing vendors such as Veritas, Veeam, and Commvault, and storage and data management players such as NetApp, Dell, and HPE that are all investing to establish a firmer stake in the ground.

Acronis serves over 500,000 customers and 40% of its business is generated in Europe. Its key customers include large household brands such as Tesco, Orange, Audi, Deutsche Bank, Lego,

Unilever, Airbus, and BASF. It also serves over 200,000 small and medium enterprises in the region. It will need to work with its partner community in Europe to educate enterprises on the benefits of having a next-gen, unified approach to data protection in their hybrid infrastructure. It will need to highlight, using PoCs and use cases, its customers' business outcomes and cost savings.

New Generation of Data Protection

The addition of private and public cloud support for backing up and migrating workloads, reliable cloud storage, data protection against ransomware with automated restoration of damaged data, and the use of blockchain technology demonstrate Acronis' commitment to making backup and data protection fit for the digital economy.

Acronis is at heart an engineering company focused on innovation. But it should now look to communicate these innovations – in business outcome terms – to its channel community and potential customers. IDC sees this as critical so that Acronis can fully benefit from the early-mover advantage it has from a technology viewpoint.

We believe Acronis' unified centralized data protection mantra of any infrastructure, any workload, any storage, any protection, any recovery gives enterprises a unified, single pane of glass to protect their entire enterprise. It now needs to woo enterprises and partners that have been reluctant to update the backup and data protection products they have been using for 10-15 years, and work to stitch these products together.

Acronis 12.5 is a significant chapter in the company's data protection capabilities, positioning it as a vendor that can meet users' compliance, security, protection, and data management challenges.

IDC believes GDPR offers a narrow window of opportunity for data protection vendors, with providers tripping over each other to showcase the capabilities of their technologies. With Backup 12.5, Acronis has the potential to address the backup, recovery, and data protection challenges that European enterprises face in terms of GDPR, the changing threat landscape, and hybrid and multicloud infrastructures.

Acronis has placed a stake in the ground as a next-generation backup and data protection provider. It now needs to spread the message to its partners and customers in Europe for sustained, long-term growth.

LEARN MORE

Synopsis

IDC analyzes and reviews the Acronis Backup 12.5 solution from Acronis. We also assess how the solution fits in the fast-changing data protection and backup market in Europe and the tough GDPR data protection regulation that comes into effect in May 2018.

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