

White Paper

StarWind Virtual SAN®

FREE vs. PAID

Brief

StarWind Virtual SAN® is a virtual shared storage that eliminates any need for a SAN or NAS or other physical shared storage. StarWind VSAN installs on top of virtualized or bare metal servers, or comes as a pre-packaged Linux VM, depending on the scenario. The software “mirrors” internal storage between hypervisor servers to create a fault-tolerant shared storage pool. It integrates into an operating system or a hypervisor for performance and simplicity of use.

When using StarWind Virtual SAN to manage your business data, there are two options to consider, free and paid: install and “self-support” it or... Invest into our engineers to configure and “babysit” your virtualization infrastructure completely.

Introduction

This document compares commercial and free versions of StarWind Virtual SAN. The Free edition, unlike other vendors' similar offers, which are essentially cut and limited versions of the main products, StarWind Virtual SAN Free is a full-fledged production storage platform. The comparison will reveal the difference between the free vs. paid versions in detail and show the capabilities of different scenarios.

The common thing is that both versions can be configured as the principal storage provider to hyperconverged and converged environments. In the first case, StarWind can be used to virtualize the internal storage of the hyperconverged infrastructure thereby creating Virtual SAN between the clustered servers. Further, the hyperconverged storage can be carved up into new logical volumes. In the second approach, when the environment is separated into compute and storage resources, StarWind pools the resources of the storage servers and thereby builds the dedicated SAN/NAS storage cluster.

This white paper is intended for virtualization admins and StarWind users who need information on the commercial and free versions .

A full set of up-to-date technical documentation can always be found [here](#), or by pressing the [Help](#) button in the StarWind Management Console.

For any technical inquiries please visit our [online community](#), [Frequently Asked Questions page](#), or use the [support form](#) to contact our technical support department.

StarWind Virtual SAN

Paid version is an "a la carte" solution that comes with a few "bonus" features and effective support service. With commercial StarWind Virtual SAN, you are in the caring hands of StarWind engineering team, who can assist you 24/7 with any issues.

Being an IT director or senior system administrator, CFO, or other decision maker in business is a complex task. It is essential to know how to estimate a company's budget and optimize its operational expenses, care about uptime and general availability of its mission-critical IT infrastructure and actively look for highly performing, well-supported, and still inexpensive storage built with virtualization in mind. StarWind offers proper solutions to this challenge! A storage with an unbeatable support plan, Enterprise-grade features, highest possible performance, and strict Service Level Agreements.

Top-notch support provided. Technically, there is a complete "fire-and-forget" IT solution. Once one pulls the trigger and pays the bills, our qualified support engineers do initial PoC and production setup, they

help with picking proper hardware configuration, provide 24/7 support, and, generally speaking, "babysit" your entire IT infrastructure!

StarWind VSAN is a feature-rich software. The solutions sophisticated feature set enables even the smallest environment to experience 99.9999% uptime and be fully shielded from disasters. StarWind VSAN is hardware- and hypervisor-agnostic, meaning that it's going to fit any infrastructure configurations that already exist as long as it meets the solution's minimum technical requirements. No hardware compatibility lists (HCLs), so you can scale up or out whenever and however.

Use cases include:

- > Shared storage for Microsoft Hyper-V VMs and SQL Server DBs (HA iSCSI & CA SMB 3.1.1)
- > Shared storage for Microsoft Failover Clusters, Exchange, Oracle and SAP DBs (HA iSCSI)
- > Shared storage for VMware vSphere Clusters (HA iSCSI)
- > Shared storage for VMware ESXi VMs (HA iSCSI)
- > HA storage (VDI, Backups) (HA iSCSI)
- > Shared storage for KVM, Citrix XenServer and Xen Project VMs (HA iSCSI & CA SMB 3.1.1)
- > HA file server (general purpose file sharing, VDI profiles, backups etc.) (SMB 3.1.1 & NFS 4.1)
- > Scalable backup storage (iSCSI & VTL)

StarWind Virtual SAN Free

Free version comes with an unrestricted set of features: multi-tiered server-side caching is available out of the box, scale-up and scale-out are both allowed, VTL is not included.

StarWind Virtual SAN Free also supports any deployment scenario, such as:

"Hyper-Converged", "Compute and Storage Separated", and various combinations. In the first scenario, StarWind Virtual SAN Free allows creating a hyperconverged infrastructure by converting the internal storage capacity of the clustered servers into a Virtual SAN. In the second scenario, when the environment is separated into compute and storage components, StarWind Virtual SAN Free can be used to build the dedicated SAN/NAS storage cluster. Free version can be deployed on a bare-metal Windows Server or installed inside a virtual machine.

Unrestricted protocol support. Highly Available iSCSI (including iSER), Continuously Available SMB 3.1.1 shares, and Failover NFS 4.1 mount points are all supported.

StarWind Virtual SAN Free is shipped with a set of ready-to-use PowerShell scripts that will help users to quickly deploy the Virtual SAN infrastructure and configure most of its features. Moreover, any StarWind Free user is allowed to modify existing scripts, create new ones, and share them with others. Finally, the free version doesn't have any synthetic performance limitations, so the resulting performance of this solution stands in line with Enterprise-class storage arrays.

Use cases include:

- > Shared storage for Microsoft Hyper-V VMs and SQL Server DBs (HA iSCSI & CA SMB 3.1.1)
- > Shared storage for Microsoft Failover Clusters, Exchange, Oracle and SAP DBs (HA iSCSI)
- > Shared storage for KVM, Citrix XenServer and Xen Project VMs (HA iSCSI & CA SMB 3.1.1)
- > HA file server (general purpose file sharing, VDI profiles, backups) (SMB 3.1.1 & NFS 4.1)
- > Shared storage for VMware vSphere Clusters (HA iSCSI)
- > Shared storage for VMware ESXi VMs (HA iSCSI)
- > HA storage (VDI, Backups) (HA iSCSI)

The Free version is intended to be self-supported or community-supported on public discussion forums. Our engineers will still do their best to help you with your possible technical "hiccups", but our delivery here is not guaranteed because of obvious reasons.

Comparison Matrix

Key Points	StarWind Virtual SAN Free	StarWind Virtual SAN Paid
Maximum Number of StarWind Nodes	3 nodes	Unlimited*
Maximum number of initiator hosts		Unlimited
Served Capacity		Unlimited
License Life Time (TTL)		Perpetual
Capacity Expansion Options		Scale-Up and Scale-Out
Served Protocols (NAS & SAN)	<p style="text-align: center;">iSCSI</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Active-Active" mode (workload is distributed across all StarWind nodes) MPIO (Multipath I/O, Multipathing) iSER protocol support (RDMA)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SMB 3.1.1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SMB Direct (RDMA) SMB Multichannel SMB Transparent Failover</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NFS v4.1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NFS Multichannel NFS over RDMA</p>	

Key Points

**StarWind Virtual SAN
Free**

**StarWind Virtual SAN
Paid**

**Deployment
Scenarios**

Hyper-Converged"
(Including the ability to run inside the hypervisor kernel without a "controller VM")
"Compute and Storage Separated"

**Deployment
Methods**

Windows Application,
Windows VM-based, Cloud-based

Windows Application, Cloud-based
Linux VM-based

**Supported
Hypervisors**

Hyper-V, Xen, KVM, vSphere

**StarWind Virtual SAN
Management
Capabilities**

Command line (Windows PowerShell),
VVOLs, SMI-S

Management Console, Web Console
PowerShell, VVOLs, SMI-S
Management Console, Web Console

Features

All

**Technical Support
Assistance (Give us
a call to know more
as this one is really
something special
in our Paid version!)**

- Self-supported or Community-supported on StarWind Forums
- Pre- and Post-Sale Technical Support; via Phone, E-mail, and StarWind Forums
- Remote Troubleshooting Sessions
- 24/7/365 Premium Support options with 1 Hour Response Time
- Strict Service Level Agreements
- Dedicated Support Engineer
- StarWind Virtual SAN Installation and Configuration Assistance
- Hypervisor and 3rd Party Software configuration
- StarWind Proactive Premium Support

*The StarWind VSAN trial version is limited by 3 nodes.

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