Market Roundup

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Seek and Ye Shall Find: EMC Adds Search to Storage
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IBM Continues SMB Drive

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Seek and Ye Shall Find: EMC Adds Search to Storage

By Jim Balderston

EMC has announced a new search engine for its Centera storage products. The new engine, Centera Seek, allows users to search metadata of files stored on Centera systems. Centera Seek also includes a specific application called Chargeback Reporter that allows administrators to track which departments are using what levels of resources and allows administrators to adjust those levels accordingly. Centera Seek indexes information on Centera systems and allows that information to be searched in a much more English-language-friendly fashion, largely doing away with specific query language for searches. The Centera Seek technology presently runs only on Dell servers, and is targeted primarily at Centera installations. Centera Seek alone is priced at $4,000 per server; Chargeback Reporter costs $5,000 per server.

EMC continues to forge ahead with its strategy to offer value-added enhancements to its storage hardware as a means of driving revenue growth. Such a strategy makes eminent sense when one considers that storage hardware increasingly is becoming a commodity product. Offering new ways to improve the storage, management, and manipulation of data provides non-commodity value to that hardware and gives EMC a much more compelling story to tell its customers.

We have found that one of the prime metrics for new technology offerings is the impact such offerings have on users' behavior. In this instance, it would appear that administrators have gained a tool to manage and bill for storage needs in a much more granular and efficient manner. Allowing such chargebacks offers the IT staff the opportunity to manage their storage networks in new and different ways. The ease of the search function may also provide new opportunities beyond the IT glass room, since easier searches allow more users to seek information without having to request an IT "gatekeeper" to generate a complex query string. Allowing more ubiquitous search options may have the impact of changing not only the behavior of the end users, but their attitudes toward the stored data as well, as the data itself becomes more valuable than some difficult-to-find bit of arcane information requiring multiple hoop-leaps to obtain. Seek, and ye shall find!

HP Promotes the Simple Life

By Rob Kidd

HP recently announced HP Storage Essentials (SE), an offering that unifies storage and server management. SE integrates with HP Systems Insight Manager (SIM), the HP cross-server and storage management platform provided at no cost with HP server and storage systems. HP SE is a suite of standards-based plug-ins that add advanced storage functionality to HP SIM, including integrated heterogeneous functionality for SAN-NAS management, storage resource management, provisioning, and application infrastructure monitoring. The goal of SE is to consolidate and integrate data center management islands. SE improves application infrastructure monitoring and provides the ability to align storage tiers with business needs. By helping to virtualize and automate server and storage management, the software enables administrators to shift resources and capacity as business demands change. HP SE is the result of an OEM relationship between HP's StorageWorks Division and AppIQ. As part of the long-term agreement, HP will OEM AppIQ's StorageAuthority Enterprise Edition product line, and HP and AppIQ will collaborate on future product development. SE will start shipping in March, with prices ranging from approximately $2,000 to $60,000.

Tightly integrated, single-console storage, server, and network management have long been on the wish list of enterprise IT. Currently under intense pressure to cut costs, simplify, and consolidate control, organizations more than ever seek such solutions. Past efforts to achieve these goals have been severely hampered by differences in vendor technologies and products. With the strong embrasure and emergence of open source and standards, integrated and unified control is now becoming feasible. The HP SE software is AppIQ's StorageAuthority Storage Resource Management (SRM) software, offering rich functionality and sophisticated tools, and based on the widely accepted industry SIM-S management structure and standard. HP plans to have its SE software fully and tightly integrated with HP SIM server management software by year-end, to give administrators a single integrated control point for both servers and storage systems. Both HP current and potential customers should find HP SE attractive and be willing to pay for it. It enables server and storage management infrastructure to support both HP-developed and third-party technology, allowing IT to use the technology most appropriate to their needs.

HP's StorageWorks division has had its share of customer defections, and has posted large revenue and market share losses. This offering may help stem the bleeding and contribute to stabilization, but will only constitute part of the solution to HP's storage problems. In our opinion the fact that HP has been willing to trade OpenView Storage Area Manager (SAM) for AppIQ's SRM is a good strategy. Going forward, heterogeneous, tightly integrated server and storage management would help add value to HP storage offerings, make HP storage more competitive, and create an additional revenue stream. It remains to be seen if the future reality of HP server and storage management lives up to the vision of the simpler life that company purports to offer.

IBM Continues SMB Drive

By Jim Balderston

IBM a number of announcements this week concerning its ongoing efforts to penetrate the SMB market. In the first announcement the company unveiled a series of initiatives to assist IBM business partners selling into the SMB market. Included among these activities is the Built on IBM Express Portfolio program, which allows partners to market their approved products with an IBM emblem. This program will be available to business partners, ISVs, and RSIs. The company also announced the Business Partner Application Showcase, in which end users can locate and select IBM business partners and their products, and then connect directly to those partners. Also new is IBM's SystemSeller program, by which IBM business partners can purchase IBM products more quickly from IBM and have them pre-configured for specific industry verticals. In a separate press release, IBM announced it will be investing $300 million in its partner ecosystem, in which it will provide more direct consulting from IBM to business partners as well as managed services offerings, education, and sales programs for hosted services.

IBM has noted that its SMB sales organization delivers 20% of the company's annual revenue. Clearly the company is trying to improve on that number by continuing investments in its partner ecosystem as the path to market. As we have noted numerous times, IBM's commitment to allowing its partners to move products by means of their specific expertise and relationships with SMB customers is a solid strategy that allows IBM to leverage both its and its partners' strengths. By doing so, we believe, the company will continue to make headway into the SMB market.

And from our point of view, IBM continues to ride a favorable tailwind into the SMB market. The company has done a significant amount of work to provide self-propulsion by offering its Express portfolio of SMB-specific products based on its enterprise class offerings, as well as making concerted efforts to fortify its partner ecosystem as noted above. IBM's internal efforts to make headway into the SMB market are notable, but may not be the single largest factor in what we believe will be their growing success in the SMB market. Instead, we suspect that IT demands on SMBs will continue to act as a pull-through for increasingly robust and – dare we say it – enterprise-class functionality and features. SMBs create and must store, manage, and expose more data each and every day. At the same time, with each passing day they become more and more intertwined in the customers' IT infrastructure. Since most of SMB's customers are larger enterprises, SMBs are under considerable pressure to maintain IT currency with their larger customers as a prerequisite for doing business. IBM is well positioned to offer products with enterprise-class pedigrees to a market that increasingly will demand such products as a necessity for doing business. Not a bad place to be at all.