Market Roundup

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HP Raises Its AppIQ

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

This week HP announced the next generation of its storage management software, HP Storage Essentials 5.0. The newest version incorporates the AppIQ technology that HP acquired on October 24. HP first formed a strategic OEM and joint development alliance with AppIQ in February 2005. AppIQ's SRM and SAN management products integrate heterogeneous storage monitoring, reporting, correlating, provisioning, and automation capabilities. HP explained that Storage Essentials incorporates standards such as DMTF-CIM, SMI-S and J2EE, and is integrated with Systems Insight Manager (SIM), the foundation of their infrastructure management strategy. In addition to the new product launch, HP also unveiled its roadmap for its unified infrastructure management platform. HP plans strategic investments in areas such as OpenView, multi-vendor backup capabilities, and NAS filer management, as well as cluster and virtual systems management.

Storage management is a hot topic in the vendor world these days. Companies like EMC, Symantec/Veritas, and AppIQ have been growing in this space. Last week IBM announced Aperi, its open standards-based approach to the challenge, and HP has purchased AppIQ, throwing down its gauntlet. It seems the game is afoot. The reason storage management is the fashion issue du jour is that there is an awful lot of stuff to store out there, it's growing, and most companies are seriously under-equipped to deal with the onslaught. These various management programs are designed to do two things mainly: to orchestrate management of existing infrastructure, which tends to be varied and dispersed, and to find some degree of commonality or even integration with other management programs for servers, systems, and even potentially networks. This is a good idea, and the industry has a long way to go. HP's integration of AppIQ was quick because they'd been working with the company's products for eight months. This was more a formalization of ownership than a large technical undertaking. On the other hand, we hope HP has learned past lessons on how to manage software companies and will be able to exploit AppIQ's possibilities beyond the technical one. In particular, non-HP users of AppIQ technology will need to be treated well. EMC has demonstrated that this is possible with its VMware technology; whether HP is equally adept remains to be seen. The need to succeed is especially important as it is easier to change hardware than software. Vendors who win customers over to their storage software have a tighter relationship than those who rely predominantly on the hardware to generate loyalty. The reason for this is straightforward: customers spend more time with their software than their hardware.

As we are wont to do, we will once again point out that management of the infrastructure has limited benefit to organizations if they are not also working out a plan on the management of the contents as well. Storage management programs are good for the technical people as they manage technical resources, but they do little or nothing for the business side; that is, answering the questions of what defines information, what its value is to the organization, and how it needs to interact with other information within the organization. Some might argue that this is what information lifecycle management (ILM) is all about. Regardless of the nomenclature used, vendors are still working on their offerings in this space. It is largely limited to individual services engagements with large enterprise. It is also heavily affected by vertical industry parameters, which means it is not something easy to package and distribute to partners, channels, and the larger mid-market base who also need to manage their information but may not have corresponding skills or budgets to take advantage of current offerings.

IBM and Google

By *Jim Balderston*

IBM has announced a new plug-in for its enterprise search technology enabling it to integrate with the Google Desktop for Enterprise, a free download which allows users to search for content on their desktops. IBM's WebSphere Information Integrator OmniFind uses the Google feature to extend its function into the user's own desktop, and even allows users to search for information and files across the enterprise. This latest announcement follows an earlier deal between the two companies, in which the Google Enterprise Desktop was integrated into Lotus Notes allowing Notes users to search the full text of their email messages.

Much of the news concerning the management of information focuses on storing, securing, and managing ever more daunting amounts of data. Mid-tier companies today are cranking out data — and storing it — at rates seen in large enterprises of just a few years ago. No wonder storage vendors of all sizes and shapes are going gangbusters these days. But there is a big difference between storing and managing information and getting it into the hands of the people that need it.

Google's success in providing useful data search and retrieval on the World Wide Web is well known, and the company has also made sizeable inroads on its desktop search tool as word-of-mouth spreads its value proposition among consumers. With IBM's official adoption of the technology inside the firewall, we suspect Google will gain some street cred there as well even if there is little or no revenue in the deal for the company. IBM can now offer its customers a much more thorough means by which they can find needed information and picks up a little of that Google glamour to boot. Google has been a true innovator in how it delivers services and how it deploys technology. While IBM is no slouch in research or new technology development, rubbing shoulders with some of Google's brains might be the source of even more inspired innovations.

Another Battle in the Security War

By *Susan Dietz*

In the wake of near-record security breaches in the past year, several U.S. Congressmen have proposed various pieces of legislation that would enforce tighter security within data storage companies, make notification to consumers mandatory in the wake of any security breach, give consumers ownership over their own data, or combinations of these. Privacy advocacy groups are lobbying for tougher laws and tighter restrictions, while members of Congress wrangle about best overall solutions. As of this writing there have not been any laws passed, but data storage companies seem to believe that it is only a matter of time.

The estimates of how many databases have information about any particular person vary, but for ease of discussion, we're going to estimate fifty. Out of those fifty databases, maybe thirty-nine of them have wildly incorrect information. (Which is one reason a single twenty-something woman gets Viagra spam.) Part of the debate in Congress is about letting consumers own their own data; if that were the case, it would be up to each consumer to "fix" the databases that were incorrect, which brings up its own can of worms. One of the problems with that would be in knowing which databases had which names. Online databases are a person's alter-ego or avatar, and as such, many agree, should be open to being fixed by the consumer. How to go about securing that goal is a bone of contention, however.

An avatar that is under the watchful eye of the government — perhaps in an anti-terrorist database, even by accident — would be extremely difficult for an ordinary citizen to even find, let alone fix. There are stories about eighteen-month-old babies who were not allowed to board planes because their names were on terrorist databases, even though their parents' names were not. These mistakes took an inordinately long time to correct, because government processes are rarely transparent or straightforward, and thus allow that an eighteen-month-old should be considered a terrorist threat. How much worse would it be for the average adult to take himself off of such a database? All the while the trend in information seems to be growing numbers of data stores controlled by both private companies and emerging governmental über-databases. One great fear seems to be a single-source big brother data store containing all of a person's credit information, buying habits, address and phone number,

and medical information, neatly wrapped up in one easily hackable place. On the other hand, maybe we watch too many movies. It certainly isn't easy processing information into a usable format. Even though most people know their own passwords, they still sometimes have trouble getting their email, so something that's hacked and encrypted is most likely more trouble than it's worth. Still, forewarned is forearmed, and any measures that increase security aren't a bad idea in the long run.

Riding the Ruby Rails

By Jim Balderston

Recent news reports indicate that developers seeking easier ways to build Web applications are embracing a new open source development tool, Ruby on Rails. The new tool, less than a year old, was created by David Hansen, and combines elements of the PHP scripting approach as well as elements of the Java programming language to create the open source development tool. Developers are reporting that RoR is up to ten times faster in developing code than alternatives and a number are predicting that Ruby on Rails will be widely adopted within enterprise development circles.

Developers can tend to be a grumpy lot, not prone to enthusiastic embrace of new tools designed to make their lives "easier." In most cases such skepticism is both judicious and prescient in situations where the locals take a similar stance with a bureaucrat who announces "Hi, I from the government and I am here to help you." In this case, apparent ardor for the Ruby on Rails offering may be the exception to that rule. Early developer enthusiasm has been likened to that for Linux or Java.

While RoR is far from widespread adoption, we are happy to go out on a limb and predict that the technology will be more widely used and will attain mainstream status in the next twenty-four months, if not sooner. While such a prediction may appear bold, or even reckless, we would argue that it is quite within rational and even conservative thinking. If we are out on a limb, we suspect its more of a thick, aged bough. If Ruby on Rails makes developers' lives easier, it's going to be scooped up. The fact that it is an open source offering puts wind behind it, not in front of it. The rapid acceptance of Linux, and the ongoing adoption of LAMP, tell us that Ruby on Rails is out of the station and well on its way.