
Market Roundup

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EMC & IBM: Mid-Market Storage Wars Redux

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

The mid-market for storage arrays is one of the sweet spots for vendors. Getting this market right is crucial to storage vendors and technology refreshes and advances can make the difference between competitors. It was no surprise therefore that EMC and IBM launched new storage offerings targeting this sector within 24 hours of each other. EMC has launched the CX3 UltraScale architecture, the newest additions to the Clariion family, with three models that scale from a maximum of 120 drives to 480 drives, along with having more memory and more processing power. The new systems scale up into space that previously only Symmetrix could scale. This represents not so much an overlap between Symmetrix and Clariion, but more a realization that mid-market and large enterprise customers have needs for scalability that may not require all of the bells and whistles of high-end systems. The new systems also support 4 Gigabit per second fibre channel end-to-end, and in the larger two models, customers will be able to mix 2GB/sec and 4GB/sec drives to create tiered storage within the same array. Separately, IBM has announced the new DS4700 with two models that also support end-to-end 4GB/sec technology. The 4GB/s interfaces are designed to auto negotiate down to 1GB/sec and 2GB/sec speeds for backward compatibility. The DS4700 also has DACstore technology that enables dynamic, data-intact portability to every drive.

While the headlines are full of the eye-catching faster interfaces for greater performance, the important thing is that mid-market storage is no longer a mini-me, hacked down product to fit a lower price point. These new products offer genuine performance and scalability improvements over previous offerings. Customers may also find this provides a good opportunity for storage consolidation of older products.

Information lifecycle management (ILM) is all about putting the data on the appropriate storage depending on its relative value at any point in time. Tiered storage—the ability to move data to the appropriate storage as its value changes—is an idea the vendors have flogged for some time, but it requires storage systems that provide varying levels of performance, scalability, and availability as well to meet various tier requirements. EMC's Clariion and Symmetrix systems are clearly differentiated, as are IBM's DS4000 systems and the DS6000 and DS8000 families. Customers looking to expand their mid-level storage with faster, more scalable systems should take a look at these new systems. Both vendors have contributed intellectual property and new capabilities. EMC has a new architecture for the CX3 systems, and IBM has improved various technologies in the new DS4700 system. It is worth having a look. Of course since these two competitors are vying for the same customer mind share, we expect the competitive wars to heat up, especially as the systems were announced so close to each other. Neither wants the other to have an advanced lead in this space. EMC and IBM customers will probably talk to their account managers and channel partners in the quarter. We also wonder when HP and others will launch their products. Mid-market storage in 2006 is an exciting place to be.

System i, iSCSI, and BladeCenter

By *Clay Ryder*

IBM has announced new BladeCenter and server offerings targeting SMBs who are seeking enhanced management capabilities. Among the announcements were the IBM Server Connectivity Module for IBM BladeCenter, which delivers Ethernet interconnectivity between the processor blades, management modules, and the external network environment for SMBs that have limited on-site networking skills; management technology leveraging System i's virtual storage, networking, and tape resources designed to simplify Windows server management; IBM Implementation Services Servicepac for BladeCenter, an service offering to help SMBs quickly deploy a BladeCenter; and a new financing package for SMB customers or smaller departmental acquisitions. A new iSCSI host bus adapter (iSCSI HBA) provides systems management and disk consolidation features and enables BladeCenter and System x to integrate with System i through a standard iSCSI connection on i5/OS V5R4 while coexisting with IXS and System x models attached via IXA. From this, organizations can manage multiple Windows servers with System i Navigator & IBM Director, centralize Windows data and take advantage of System i virtual storage architecture and resources for dynamic storage management and performance, and consolidate Windows and i5/OS backups while using high-speed System i tape drives. Additionally, System i management provides for the synchronization of Windows and i5/OS user IDs and passwords as well as simplified network configuration, data access, and application communication through virtual network connections. The Server Connectivity Module for IBM BladeCenter is now available priced starting at \$999 in the U.S. The System i management feature for Windows will be available on May 19, starting at \$999. The IBM Implementation Services Servicepac for BladeCenter is available through IBM IGS and IBM Business Partners in the U.S. and Canada for \$6,999.

What we consider to be one of the best kept secrets in the industry is how the System i can manage a seemingly complex entanglement of Windows-based systems. Although those in the know are quite aware of the management agility of the System i, many organizations simply do not equate the System i with Windows management. To our way of thinking, this is a shame. With the announcement of the iSCSI HBA we believe that a greater portion of the marketplace would be able to take advantage of the System i, as iSCSI is a growing connectivity option, especially for SMBs. With the coming support for select System x and BladeCenter, we believe that iSCSI could play an important role for the System i. But in order for this to happen, some serious marketing acumen will need to be deployed.

We cannot overlook that the public announcement of iSCSI HBA, as with System i 520 Collaboration Edition, has been low key, if not completely mute. This is worrisome, as System i should be positioned as an SMB "go to" solution for consolidation, Windows administration, centralized backup and file sharing, among many others. But rather than hearing System i beating its chest extolling its virtues, we are witnessing other server families in effect positioning System i, by default. Recent announcements from System z about entry-point solutions attractive to mid-sized business can cause iFUD if System i is not properly positioned differentiated against System z. This week's announcement of System i connectivity and management came under the auspices of BladeCenter, and one had to squint pretty hard to see it as well. When the System i5 was announced, we commented that the iSeries had some great hardware underneath, but would need to extol the virtues of its software stack in order to take back and revitalize the market. While there was some initial marketing push, it is not so evident at present. The recent sales figures for System i have been lackluster, and one cannot help but wonder if the lack of aggressive marketing, like that found with other IBM Systems, has something to do with the platform's sales doldrums. We still like System i, in fact we like it a lot, but stealth marketing is not going to be the answer to grow the System i to the market position of which we believe the platform is worthy.

SAS Expands Software as a Service Offerings

By *Tony Lock*

SAS is thirty years old this year and is now one of the world's leading suppliers of business intelligence solutions. The company is also the largest privately held software supplier bar none. Earlier this week SAS announced that it

is expanding its software as a service offering by making five “on demand” hosted software solutions available for immediate use. The company’s existing offering, SAS Solutions OnDemand: Web Analytics, will now be supplemented by SAS Solutions OnDemand: Business Intelligence, SAS Solutions OnDemand: Customer Relationship Management, SAS Solutions OnDemand: Marketing Automation, SAS Solutions OnDemand: Veridium Marketing Resource Management and SAS Solutions OnDemand: Anti-Money Laundering.

“On Demand” or hosted solutions allow organizations to make use of the application functionality without having to deploy the software internally and with little, if any, need to administer it on a daily basis. All a user/customer requires is access to the Internet, a supported Web browser and a bit of training, and away they go. It is true to say that the use of “on demand” software is now entering a phase of rapid growth especially, though not exclusively, with small and mid-scale organizations that can benefit from enterprise-scale applications without the need to deploy and manage enterprise-scale infrastructure. Of equal import to many is the fact that these hosted solutions are frequently offered on a “rental” or subscription basis whereby the customer does not need to purchase the software and supporting IT infrastructure up front but simply pays a monthly or quarterly bill based on application usage patterns, normally based on a fee for user per month.

The fact that SAS is significantly extending its range of OnDemand Solutions highlights that more and more vendors are keen to make their applications available via subscription and hosted service offerings. SAS is one of the best-known suppliers of business analytic tools and its solutions provide sophisticated capabilities designed to allow organizations to exploit their internal data sources thereby releasing additional business value. The extension of the range of hosted offerings could attract many new users to try the applications. The fact that the SAS Solutions OnDemand also come with extensive support from skilled SAS experts should ensure that organizations experience benefits within a very short time period. It should be noted that the company’s mainstream offerings are also supplied on an annual subscription basis rather than with a perpetual use license, an approach that suits the adoption of the hosted offerings but that also ensures that SAS has to help its customers experience business benefits during each year of operation in order that the customer renew the subscription for the following period. The efforts of SAS to make its solutions available to new customers is to be applauded and it is to be hoped that the company does a good job marketing these solutions and, where necessary, explaining the benefits of using the hosted service approach to business analytics. SAS has also addressed the question of data security in these offerings as currently the model has customer data being sent to SAS for processing. SAS has had its systems thoroughly checked by Ernst and Young LLP where it was granted an “unqualified opinion” and “assurance report” on SAS performance on these audit standards. Security of applications and/or data residing outside the physical borders of the enterprise IT infrastructure will be a concern for some companies, but SAS appears to have addressed these issues thoughtfully and effectively. It will be fascinating to monitor how quickly these new solutions are adopted and to see which of the remaining portfolio are next made available as SAS Solutions OnDemand.

McAfee Warning to Mac Users: Buy Our Stuff

By *Susan Dietz*

McAfee Avert Labs warned recently that malware attacks against Mac OS X are on the rise. In the past three years, Mac vulnerabilities reportedly increased from 45 in 2003 to 143 in 2005. This is a 228% increase, and McAfee claims that these numbers should convince Mac users to obtain extra virus protection. Simply using a Mac rather than a PC isn’t quite enough to protect from malware any longer, according to McAfee. The company claims that Apple’s shift to Intel microprocessors is part of the reason for the increased vulnerability.

Linux users running the OS on Intel-based PCs haven’t become the subject of sustained hacker assault, however, which would seem to dispute the claim that Intel microprocessors may have something to do with the increased hacker attacks. More likely, simple numbers would suggest the fact that since Mac OS X is becoming more popular, this operating system is becoming more of a target. The reputation of being less vulnerable makes Mac OS X more attractive to those seeking a perceived higher level of security. Furthermore, those companies seem to be naturally attractive targets for hackers who are no longer simply motivated by the “because I can” factor. The pimply-faced script kiddie with something to prove has grown up into the adult hacker with rent to pay, and thus

has most likely turned toward more focused targets with economic gain. Why just hack when you can hack for money? The reportedly newly organized hackers are supposedly banding together to accomplish their goals more efficiently. However, combining a group of phishers to create enticing email, spammers to send lots of them out, mal code writers to develop and imbed hostile code, and of course the ultimate general contractor criminal to bring it all together takes money to build and sustain: something that makes economic targets even more attractive.

One thing that needs to be remembered is that there isn't any operating system that is completely secure. They all need to be managed to one degree or another. All organizations, especially educational organizations which rely disproportionately on Macs, ought to be more vigilant in spite of tight budgets. However, even with the large percentage growth reported, the overall finite number of attacks seems to be pretty small, at least so far. This report of increased attacks could signal McAfee (and others to be unnamed) trying to hedge their bets in the Windows security market due to Microsoft's entry and attempts to build up a nascent Mac security business. Speculation aside, while compared with Windows or Linux, Mac OS X is a relatively small platform; however, its numbers are significant and growing. As any operating system gains marketshare and mindshare, it starts to register on hackers' radar, and thus it would be expected that the OS would be the target of more, and more sophisticated, attacks. It is one of life's ironies that a system that is popular partly because of its purported resistance to attacks maybe becomes more vulnerable to attacks simply because of its popularity. Maybe it will be time to recast/reconsider those snarky Mac TV ads sooner than the folks in Cupertino may wish.