Market Roundup

Fujitsu Siemens Launches Entry-Level Data Center Virtual Tape

EMC Rainfinity 7.0 And the Emerging Information-centric Powerhouse

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Fujitsu Siemens Launches Entry-Level Data Center Virtual Tape

By Tony Lock

Fujitsu Siemens Computers has brought to market two new models of its CentricStor Virtual Tape Appliance (VTA). The two new appliances, The VTA 500 and VTA 1500, are the company's entry-level offerings into the rapidly developing world of Virtual Tape. In essence CentricStor provides integrated "disk-to-disk-to-tape" capabilities, thereby providing the means to meet a wide range of backup and archive/ILM (Information Lifecycle Management) capabilities while optimizing tape usage and limiting tape acquisition and handling costs. Both of the new systems support Mainframes and Open Systems servers and NAS systems. CentricStor VTA 500 is the entry model and can scale, with the addition of RAID systems, to provide a cache capacity of up to 22TB. The CentricStor VTA 1500 is based on the CentricStor Grid architecture of the VTA2000, its close relative, and can supply up to 173TB of cache capacity. The systems boast a synchronized "Dual Save" capability to create two copies of data on tape at the same time in addition to powerful tape management capabilities to ensure that tape usage is optimized and that tape refresh is performed on "at risk" tapes to ensure excellent data protection over the lifetime of tape cartridges. The new models will be available from December 2006 with CentricStor VTA 500 carrying a list price starting at €125,000, while CentricStor VTA 1500 will be priced from € 300,000.

The imminent Death of Tape has long been foretold by some skeptics but has wisely been ignored by most organizations; it is abundantly clear that tape still has a valuable role to play in many scenarios. Virtual Tape, on the other hand, has been around for quite some time but is only now really maturing into a technology that is fit for use in many organizations and capable of supporting many business-critical uses. Fujitsu Siemens, with its long and very sound heritage in the data center, is well positioned to exploit the high profile that Virtual Tape solutions now enjoy. The company's CentricStor platform has already proved to be reliable with the sophisticated functionality that customers need.

The launch of these new entry-level offerings deserve to attract the attention of potential customers that may have considered Virtual Tape in the past but thought the suitable offerings were not available. Equally, there are many organizations that are, as yet, either unconvinced of the possible benefits from utilizing Virtual Tape or who have simply not had the time to work out if it is for them. The launch of the VTA 500 and VTA 1500 provide Fujitsu Siemens with an opportunity not simply to highlight the value of CentricStor but also to demonstrate the company's all round credibility as a supplier of data center solutions. Indeed, these new products also give Fujitsu Siemens an opportunity to raise its profile outside of the geographies where their products are well known, i.e., outside of Germany and some of the Central European countries.

EMC Rainfinity 7.0 And the Emerging Information-centric Powerhouse

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

This week EMC announced Rainfinity Global File Virtualization version 7.0 which now supports enterprise archiving from heterogeneous file and network attached storage (NAS) to the Centera content addressed storage (CAS) platform. New in this version is the ability to automatically identify and archive static files based on customizable policies. It will also let managers archive NetApp files to Centera. At present, NetApp is the only NAS solution supported, although this will change. At present Centera is also the only target, although this too

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will change with time. The solution includes seven purpose-built applications that optimize capacity management, performance management, storage consolidation, tiered storage management, data protection, synchronous replication, and global namespace management.

File virtualization is another tool in the IT toolbox that can lead to better use of resources and through automation reduces downtime and administration costs. However, by itself, while Rainfinity is full of useful features, it cannot solve business problems. This is the inherent challenge for the storage industry. Vendors continue to create products that make storage smarter and more efficient. At the same time, users continue to create more data—especially unstructured data and rich media—so vendors' sales figures are healthy. The disconnect arises when buyers are not always aware of everything that storage—or more accurately information infrastructure—can do to help solve business issues, and vendors remain heavily product-focused in their go-to-market approach.

The issue is frequently broken down to the basics of lower costs and higher service levels, but there are a million roads to a bewildering range of destinations. Customers need vendors' help with services that help them work out what they have, where it is, how much it costs, what they need it to do, and how they might use new technologies to better manage it all. EMC believes that storage is necessary plumbing, but the really important asset for a business is the information and data within the plumbing, and helping them with that is its goal. The company believes it has superior plumbing with its traditional products, and in combination with its growing library of software and its developing services portfolio, it should be the customer's strategic partner for the information infrastructure. EMC isn't at the end point yet, but from what we can see, it has the clearest articulation of an information-based strategy that we've seen from anyone yet, and we think that gives it an edge despite market confusion over why it has branched into other technologies.

EMC is still best known as a storage company with systems like Symmetrix and CLARiiON. It has also managed to acquire some other really well known and well respected products. Rainfinity was one of its acquisitions, as were Legato, VMWare, and most recently, RSA. While the attraction of companies like Legato or Rainfinity was fairly easy to work out, purchasing companies like VMWare and RSA has seemed odd or even wrong to some. For EMC watchers, however, a vision is emerging that if implemented will result in a new powerhouse among technology vendors that reaches far beyond the traditional disk array and backup spaces. EMC is positioning itself as an information management vendor, spanning everything from the basic infrastructure, to the management of structured and unstructured data governed by business rules, to protection from loss all wrapped within a security paradigm that is itself information-centric. That sounds ambitious, and it is, but EMC has been assembling the pieces to do just that. This new version of Rainfinity by itself is interesting for those who need file virtualization—a hot technology according to EMC—but it also another proof point that EMC is slowly but surely accumulating the pieces to make its vision into reality.