

► IBM ANNOUNCES INTENTION TO BECOME THE NUMBER ONE STORAGE DISK VENDOR WITH ITS NEW PRODUCT FAMILY

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On 12 October 2004, IBM announced its intention to become the leading disk storage vendor, with the introduction of a new family of disk storage products. The DS8000 series is an enterprise-class disk system that provides linear scalability, Fibre Channel interconnect, and is highly expandable. At the other end of the scale the DS6000 provides enterprise-class functionality at a lower cost, and dramatically reduced size. Its target market is medium and large enterprises. It supports mainframe and open system servers, as well as a wide range of operating systems.

The Big Picture

IBM has announced its intention to compete more aggressively with EMC, as it aims to becoming the number one vendor in disk storage. To this end it is intended that the DS6000 will compete with the CLARiiON range from EMC. Butler Group believes that if IBM adds the ability to utilise ATA disk as well as high-performance disks in the DS6000, and develops a means of creating unique identifiers, IBM could have a device that competes with EMC Centera. Because of its ability to have more than one disk type in a single unit, a single DS6000 could hold live and archived data, making it an affordable option for SMEs. The DS6000 is PowerPC-based, and has been designed with ease-of-implementation and management in mind.

The DS8000 is a flexible storage system, with a physical capacity ranging from 1.1TB to 192TB, but the architecture will scale up to 96PB. Integrated packages of 16 disk drives can be added in mixed and matched packages of 73GB, 146GB, and 300GB sizes. It incorporates virtualisation with storage system Logical PARTitioning (LPAR). LPARs allow entirely separate storage subsystems to be created, which can be run in the same or different versions of the microcode.

The DS8000 is a high-end storage solution, which has clearly been designed to compete with enterprise storage systems from EMC and other vendors, with virtualisation capabilities that make it an ideal solution for organisations looking to consolidate their storage. The ability to mirror data from the DS8000 to the DS6000 does, in our opinion, provide organisations with the option of using the DS6000 in their disaster recovery data replication strategies.

The DS family is completed by the DS4000 series and the DS300. The DS4000 provides storage systems for heterogeneous UNIX and Windows environments, and these were formerly the IBM TotalStorage FAST storage servers.

IBM is hoping that the introduction of the DS family will provide scalable storage solutions across the board, from the smallest distributed storage server to the largest data centre, simplifying storage infrastructures and improving information lifecycle management. However, IBM has to do much more than just sell into its existing customer-base if it wants to achieve the number one position in disk storage.

Butler Group Opinion

It will not be easy to take sufficient market share from EMC and other disk vendors to become the leading vendor. However, IBM is one of the few vendors that have the resources to achieve this – with the right strategy, that is!

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