Wow!! – For Me??

IBM Feature Packs the Mid-range!

Generally Mid-sized companies can hardly afford the goodies available for high-end enterprises even if the need for its functions and features are there. This has been particularly true until recent times in the storage space where by most vendors have not focused on bringing their high-end features down to this segment. Recently this has begun to change and now comes the even more dramatic announcement of an IBM storage offering for this segment packed with sweet goodies but also at an affordable price and in a tiny box! (Imaging these customers wanting their entire infrastructure in a box – even a virtual box!!).

With its TotalStorage DS6000 series, IBM delivers high availability and performance in a small modular package. Leveraging its systems heritage the company is blurring the line between midrange and enterprise-class storage. This product is designed to simplify the infrastructure, provide business continuity, scalability, redundancy, modularity and even virtualisation all at a very competitive price/performance backet. Additionally give its modularity, size and foot print - it is designed to go via most business partners who don't even need to be certified to install it. It is expected that even the end user can do the installation! All this and it comes with a four year parts warranty. TekPlus believes this product will revolutionise the high-end segment of the mid-sized enterprises and induce a new level of competitive play. It will also highlight the increasing importance of modularity in the enterprise.

Storage has now become critically important for both mid-sized and large enterprises. Mid-Size enterprise storage needs are growing rapidly with growth in information, e-business, email and their profound focus on disaster recovery and business continuity. Most Mid-Size enterprises can't afford to have significant numbers of people to manage their information and storage needs - that's one reason why they are also increasingly adopting new software management tools. With falling prices in network storage solutions and advances in scalable, infrastructure friendly IP based SAN solutions, demand is fuelling for storage among Mid-sized as well as the SMEs.

The storage trends that Mid-size Enterprises are currently experiencing revolve around exploding data, interoperability and the complexity of heterogeneous IT infrastructure. Increased use of web and deployment of applications is increasing demands for storage capacity and performance among mid sized organisations and TekPlus believes that this demand for storage systems will continue to grow with increasing growth in basic transaction data in all the verticals. Their requirements are for Multi-vendor storage interoperability, storage virtualisation and consolidated and infrastructure simplification measures. There is also a visible demand for backup and recovery software. While discussing with some of the mid sized enterprises, TekPlus has observed an increased interest in on-demand and managed storage services. From the storage vendors' point of view overall infrastructure and support prices are becoming highly competitive; in fact many vendors are increasing their focusing on software as a differentiator.

TekPlus believes that with better storage capabilities, mid sized enterprises can better understand their customers, speed up their time-to-market, shorten 'product cycles', enhance organisational productivity and can use stored data to leverage business growth. Some of the key issues that the decision makers of mid sized enterprises face are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Pain points for Mid-Sized Enterprise decision makers
Lack of expertise to size up various vendor's product features and functionalities and differentiate their performance capabilities.
Lack of knowledge to understand how the features and functionalities can address their short and long-term storage priorities.
Lack of understanding of how not to invest upfront in existing technology which may offer no clear upgrade or strategy in future.
High upfront investment costs.
Lack of skilled IT personnel
Exploding data loads and ever-increasing information needs of mission critical data.
Inability to utilise their storage hardware capabilities to the fullest.

Source: TekPlus

The market dynamics are changing with the rapid growth of the mid-range storage market. Due to improved price and high performance, demand is generated form both sides – it is becoming more affordable for this segment and rich features and improved performance is attracting high-end customers. This product segment is becoming lucrative and some of the vendors with no presence in this space have started to become interested.

TekPlus expects other vendors to respond to the IBM announcement and follow in this direction. However the key to any success will be in providing a full solutions package starting at a low entry level price that includes enterprise-class functionality with consultancy

advice, services and channel empowerment.

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