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Define the Task, Define the Tool: EMC Enhances Compliance Offerings

By Charles King

EMC has announced new and enhanced capabilities for its compliance offerings for customers seeking to make compliance a seamless part of IT operations through information lifecycle management. The new EMC Proven Solution for email archiving integrates LEGATO EmailXtender email archiving application with EMC's tiered storage and services to archive email content from Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes. The EMC Content Archiving and Retrieval System (CARS) with Documentum enables customers to manage content lifecycles for compliance, while EMC CARS with Mobius enables customers to transform and archive bills, statements, check images, and other content, including mainframe-generated content, in compliance with regulations. Enhancements to CentraStar v2.3, the updated operating environment for EMC's Centera solutions, offers new retention classes, audited delete, and configurable default retention period compliance functionality. EMC's Technology Solutions group now offers Data Classification Services for creating an ILM strategy by aligning business requirements to storage architecture, data policies, and service levels, and Data Migration Services from EMC and its partners provide methodologies and tools to move information effectively while minimizing risk and accelerating business benefits. No pricing information was included in the announcement.

At one level, EMC's new and enhanced compliance offerings look like the sort of typical upgrades one sees in most IT press releases, with nary a silver bullet or magic pill in sight. But from another, more refreshing standpoint, the announcement offers evidence of the construction of or addition to a strategic initiative by practical, tactical means. This might not qualify as big news in more traditional business sectors, but it stands out in an IT industry that has tended to rely excessively on strategic vision while coming up short on usable products. Most anyone who lived through the years leading up to the dotcom bust became sadly acquainted with loonytunes IT solutions that needed a healthy dose of blind eye turning and rose-tinted light to look even vaguely usable, let alone useful. Such charlatan vendors' eventual failures may have been well deserved, but they also left many customers with a bad taste and a persistent case of high-tech jitters. The IT industry still tends to fly high on strategically oriented, vaguely defined concepts that all too often require an advanced degree in computer science or product marketing to parse out. What vendors and their customers tend to forget is that strategies are analogous to destinations: wonderful to consider and grand to arrive at. But successfully getting to any there from here requires careful planning, fortuitous events, and a bit of spilled sweat, tears, and occasionally blood along the way.

What we find most intriguing about EMC's new compliance offerings is the effort they bring to improving the incremental steps customers need to reach the goal of information lifecycle management. The EMC Proven Solutions with Legato, Documentum, and Mobius all provide tools and methodologies for dealing with specific document classes or processes. In addition, the Legato and Documentum solutions cast additional light on the long-term considerations behind those two EMC acquisitions which, if one remembers, many industry pundits and EMC competitors derogated. The enhancements to CentraStar v2.3 help extend even further the use of EMC's Centera Content Addressed Storage (CAS) solutions for compliance applications, areas where the company says Centera has found notable success. Finally, the offerings from EMC's Technology Solutions group and the company's partners provide roadside service for travelers on their way to ILM. Overall, these compliance solutions

blend a healthy dose of practical travel assistance with a visionary destination. With offerings like these, EMC's customers might just get there from here.

Being Dense Can Be a Good Thing
By Jim Balderston

The DSL Forum this week released its latest report on DSL adoption rates worldwide and found that an additional 9.5 million DSL subscribers signed up during the last quarter, ending March 31. The forum, an industry group of some 200-plus service providers, equipment manufacturers, and other parties, said the latest figures were the second consecutive quarter that new records for DSL signups had occurred, and noted that there are now 73.4 million DSL subscribers worldwide. According to the report, China added 2.85 million subscribers, the U.S. added 1.18 million, and France added 1.07 million. The report also noted that thirteen countries have more than a million DSL subscribers, and sixteen countries deliver DSL on more than 10% of their phone lines. China, Japan, the U.S., South Korea, and Germany top the list in numbers of subscribers, while South Korea, Taiwan, Belgium, Hong Kong, and Japan top the lists in percentage of phone lines delivering DSL service. In the last quarter alone, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Switzerland all passed the 10% of phone lines milestone, which the DSL Forum said is half of the 20% needed to be called mass market penetration.

While it is wise to remember that DSL providers are in a heated battle with both cable companies and satellite providers for Internet subscribers, we see these numbers as confirmation that broadband services of all types are becoming as essential to modern societies around the globe as, well, the telephone and television. What is particularly interesting to note in the DSL Forum's current report are the nations with both high subscriber numbers and deep market penetration of DSL offerings. Given DSL's roughly three-mile limit of service, its is not surprising to see the technology proliferating in counties with dense concentrations of population and widespread existing telephone service. The top five counties in subscriber numbers have population concentrations around urban areas, while others with high penetration rates like Hong Kong are almost wholly urbanized. It is also notable that only one country, South Korea, with 28.3%, has actually reached the DSL Forum's definition of mass market acceptance. Given this and the up-tick of DSL subscriber numbers over the past two quarters, clearly there remains a huge potential market for broadband worldwide going into the future.

What is most intriguing to us, however, is the near limitless set of services that increasingly ubiquitous persistent broadband to the home will eventually engender. As the penetration of persistent broadband connections grows, the market for health, safety, and convenience services will erupt, especially as in-home wireless connectivity becomes increasingly popular. Services such as home monitoring of medical conditions, or the operational safety and efficiency of home systems like heating and cooling will become standard operating procedures. These sorts of services are likely to resonate particularly in areas where the failure of heating or cooling systems could result in serious harm or death. One can also imagine broadband being used to more effectively deliver warnings of impending natural disasters, such as tornadoes or hurricanes. With RFID finding its way onto increasing numbers of products, the broadband-connected home could automatically signal the need for replenishment of key household goods before they run out or spoil. Such services will require substantial IT investments on the back end, but vendors taking advantage of increasingly ubiquitous broadband penetration and opportunities will find themselves in a position to capture markets that will extend the enterprise directly into the homes of tens of millions of consumers.

Veritas Clusters Highly-Available Penguins for Itanium
By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

Veritas has extended its storage management and clustering products to Red Hat Linux EL 3.0 on Intel's 64-bit Itanium systems. Specifically, Veritas has extended Foundation Suite 2.2, and Cluster Server 2.2, providing file system, volume management, and clustering solutions to this environment. Veritas believes this will extend the cost and flexibility advantages of Linux on 64-bit platforms.

This announcement is interesting on several levels. For one, it is a sign of the industry continuing to resolve issues relating to Linux acceptance in the datacenter. Veritas has now done its part by adding capabilities for optimized storage management and clustering with failover and disaster recovery capabilities when Linux is run on IA-64. However, while this is important news for those customers who are ready to develop applications for this environment, it is not likely to result in a sudden burst of Linux on IA-64 sales, let alone IA-64 in general. Linux continues to be used primarily as an infrastructure server OS, which is a 32-bit environment, and has been a replacement primarily for UNIX systems rather than a driver for 64-bit Intel sales. In addition, IA-64 is only favored by a tiny group of customers as a means of extending 32-bit applications to 64-bit solutions. To date, this part of the market seems more interested in the 64-bit extension technologies offered by AMD's Opteron and Intel's upcoming EM64T-enabled Xeon than in leaping to Itanium. In the near term, 64-bit Linux is and will remain a specialty market item.

What makes this announcement more interesting is what it says about Veritas. While companies like IBM and HP lead the evangelization of On Demand and Adaptive Enterprise initiatives, their primary focus is naturally on promoting their own core technologies. Veritas has built its reputation on interoperability and a vendor-neutral approach since their solutions are deployed in so many heterogeneous environments. Veritas' notion is that computing should be handled as a series of business services that function at a level managers are willing to pay for. For this message to succeed it is important not to let underlying processors or operating systems be a limiter, regardless of whether they are evolving or mature markets. IT vendors are currently re-positioning themselves to be ready to take advantage of growth as the world's economies slowly begin to recover. The underlying IT architecture is stable enough that regardless of which vendor one buys from, the kit will function acceptably. The real differentiators now lie in the customer's experience, along with the ability to combine infrastructure and applications into business services with measurable costs and value. As a result, there will be several valid methodologies depending on company size, IT needs, and vertical market among other variables. Whoever owns the business service delivery and management will sit at the heart of the customer account: an attractive proposition for the vendors, and a potentially scary thought for IT and business managers. By committing to 64-bit Linux on Intel, Veritas demonstrates that it can construct utility services for customers regardless of the underlying platform, and that the company will play where it believes their customers will eventually want and need it. At the end of the day, Veritas intends to be one of the trusted advisors of the next generation of IT customers, and announcements like this one demonstrate the company's seriousness and commitment to that goal.