Market Roundup

December 14, 2007

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EMC Updates Invista SAN Virtualization

By Clay Ryder

EMC has introduced the latest version of EMC Invista version 2.1, its flagship SAN virtualization solution. Invista is an enterprise-class, network-based storage virtualization that combines EMC application software and hardware with intelligent SAN switches from Brocade and Cisco. The new version of Invista features higher availability for improved data protection, expanded scalability for stronger performance, and enhanced management for better utilization, all of which help organizations keep their infrastructures up and running through both planned and unplanned events. Invista has enhanced high availability through the new distributed control path cluster (CPC) which allows nodes of the CPC to be separated by campus distances, providing for Invista to continue operating in the event of localized failure. The number of virtual volumes and storage elements supported has doubled, and there is a five-fold increase in the number of simultaneous mobility sessions supported. Invista's new heterogeneous pooling and mirroring functionality provides maximum flexibility in creating tiered storage pools and supports mirrored copies across different tiers. The latest release adds support for IBM DS4000 series arrays, HP PVLinks, and Sun MPxIO path management software and maintains its integration with EMC RecoverPoint to deliver heterogeneous virtual to physical—and virtual to virtual—replication support to enable deployment across multiple sites for disaster tolerance and enhanced availability. In addition, EMC Invista has now been tested, optimized and certified for use with VMware ESX Server 3.0.2, thus enabling organizations to improve their ability to manage, share, and protect the growing amount of information that is being supported by VMware Infrastructure environments. EMC Invista version 2.0 is now available; version 2.1, which includes heterogeneous mirroring and storage pooling, will be available later his month. Invista support for VMware ESX Server 3.0.2 is expected to be posted to the VMware SAN Compatibility Guide before the end of 2007.

It has been about two and a half years, give or take, since EMC originally announced the Invista platform. Given the light speed at which most IT solutions rev their release numbers and ply new features into the marketplace, it is reassuring in many respects that we are now only seeing the second major version of this platform. This is not to say that Invista has been lacking innovation or feature upgrades commensurate with the marketplace, but rather that EMC got the basic principles right the first time, and could take a more measured approach in feature support in favor of allowing end users some time to understand, consume, and realize the full potential of their Invista investment. Nevertheless, there are notable enhancements, specifically the CPC, new heterogeneous pooling and mirroring, and support for additional storage arrays, which we believe add considerably to the overall Invista value proposition. Further, the certification with the latest VMware technology should help assuage any reticence organizations may be having in leveraging the strong operational value proposition that a combined server virtualization and storage virtualization scheme can provide.

Although much of the virtualization discussion to date has focused on servers, the reality is that storage should be treated in most cases in a very similar fashion, as a virtual networked resource. As we have said before, EMC has taken the view that virtualization should occur as far down into the network as possible to take advantage of the increasing intelligence of the underlying network. In this announcement, we see that illustrated in the new

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support for HP PVLinks and Sun's MPxIO both of which aid in the quest to guarantee multipath I/O connectivity between servers and storage as part of the overall network solution. This also has advantages from a performance as well as a playing-nice-on-the-playground perspective. By preserving the inherent performance (value) that organizations have already deployed in multiple storage arrays and associated hardware and software technologies, EMC is not demanding that customers write off any portion of their past investments in order to gain tangible new value. This remains a pleasant thought to the IT professional who is seemingly all too often cajoled into replacing existing IT investments that still have considerable operational life simply in order to gain a desired or necessary new feature.

Overall, we remain pleased with the underlying vision and direction that Invista has taken. The consistent virtualization and reclamation of underutilized resources story is one that plays well in the acquisition cost- and operational expense-weary IT marketplace of today. Being able to seamlessly move data across multiple storage arrays with differing performance characteristics while maintaining operational integrity is a major must have for most any organization. Solutions such as Invista offer a level of operational efficiency and flexibility that is well positioned to meet this need. Virtualization provides a soothing balm for the IT professional that eases the management of disparate resources under a single view while also allowing greater flexibility in choosing solutions. For vendors, virtualization has been a hot marketing message with commensurate market opportunity, but with marketplace expectation that standards and cooperation trump vendor specific lock in. To our way of thinking, EMC seems well positioned to continue its SAN virtualization emphasis while furthering the relevance of virtualization across storage, servers, and networking to an ever-larger segment of the IT marketplace.

Linksys Offers Big Company Security to Small Businesses

By Lawrence D. Dietz

Linksys, a Division of Cisco Systems, Inc., has announced the Wireless-G Business Internet Video Camera with Audio (WVC2300). This latest surveillance product combined with the recently released Business Internet Video Camera with Audio and PoE (PVC2300), adds to the Linksys focus on small businesses and the channels that cater to them. Both the PVC2300 and WVC2300 offer features in a standard box-type camera design that also combines flexible mounting options. The PVC2300 works with networks utilizing Power over Ethernet (PoE) connectivity, by drawing power from a PoE Switch or power injector via Ethernet cabling. The WVC2300 is targeted at installations utilizing a secure wireless network, and uses a standard AC-power outlet. Both cameras employ removable CS-mount lenses customizable for zoom or wide-angle imaging; and vari-focal, auto-iris, or other types of lenses for specific applications or settings. The camera can also be mounted on any industry-standard Pan-Tilt base and can be remotely controlled through a Web interface. The cameras come with two input and two output ports and can be connected to an alarm panel, siren, Passive InfraRed sensor, smoke detector, lighting switch, door sensor, or other detectors. The camera also offers motion detection functionality, capable of sending event notifications, updates, and video via email.

Both products are Linksys One-ready and can be easily be deployed in Linksys One data or data/voice networks. Main features include WPA2 and QoS (WMM and 802.1p), maximum resolution of VGA , max frames rate of 30fps, RTSP Video/Audio Streaming to Unicast and Multicast clients, JPEG Snapshots at multiple resolutions that can be sent to an FTP server, a maximum of ten Unicast users and unlimited multicast users, built-in Web server for Remote Access over HTTPS, and software for Monitoring and Recording up to sixteen cameras simultaneously. Both are available immediately through distribution, online resellers, and VARs. The estimated street price for the WVC2300 is $399.99 and for the PVC2300 is $349.99.

We have been closely watching the marriage of video and the Internet, and have noticed a surge in use of video for security purposes on an international scale. Many businesses, mostly large ones, have relied on closed-circuit TV for security monitoring, and organizations such as automobile dealers have started to employ video to document transactions in the finance office to confirm that the buyer understood the disclosures and agreed to the terms. Retailers and organizations with high-value, easily monetized, and transportable assets are especially likely to employ video. By adding Internet capabilities the cost of such surveillance is reduced and greater flexibility is provided because remote personnel can monitor the activity while digital recording can be stored for later use.

It appears that video adaptation is poised for even greater growth. By offering Internet-based video capabilities to the small business arena, Linksys may be stimulating adaptations not only by small/home offices, but in departmental and consumer activities as well. We believe that video will ultimately be as common as the printed photo was in its day, and that more mainstream technology vendors will offer allied products and services. We also envision closer collaboration between media companies and IT vendors as competition heats up in both directions.

IBM Identity Management Software Simplifies IT Burden

By Lawrence D. Dietz

IBM has announced new security software designed to help clients manage user access to sensitive company information and simplify the process of compliance management. The IBM software takes a risk-based approach to help clients effectively manage user accounts, access permissions, business roles, and passwords for employees, contractors, and customers from creation to termination, helping ensure that business and security policy is set on all systems and applications across the company. New features and enhancements to IBM Tivoli Identity Manager are intended to improve management of business policy compliance, accelerate and simplify set-up and deployment, and enhance productivity of identity management for business users and IT administrators. With instructional wizards, templates, and best practices that can speed time for deployments and reduce the learning curve of new users, IBM proposes that customers may achieve an estimated 50% reduction in deployment time compared to previous releases.

The new IBM Tivoli Identity Manager integrates with IBM Tivoli Compliance Insight Manager, IBM's broad-based solution for enterprise security audit and compliance management for audit reports that map to regulations and best practices. It also provides intelligence and recommended actions on policy compliance issues, reducing the need for manual review. The software can identify unauthorized and malicious changes that would give users access to more applications than necessary to do their jobs, remove the illegitimate access, and alert designated business leaders as these events occur. It provides centralized reports on security policy, access rights and audit events to quickly respond to internal audits and regulatory mandates. The new software also handles the process of automatically correcting and removing non-compliant access rights through periodic management review and sign-off.

Large end-user organizations have been prompted to bolster their identity management technology by recent data compromises and a never-ending array of regulations. Technology that does more than identify or flag problems, but can also take remedial actions based on organizational policy and involving a minimum of interaction, would be a boon to many an enterprise. IBM has long been an advocate of lowering the skill level required to install its products and it would appear that the current announcement is tangible evidence of this philosophy.

Products such as this, that provide operational advantages while documenting actions, also have the potential to enhance an organization's compliance posture and simplify auditing. Centralized reporting is a key ingredient and very much in line with IBM's history of providing tools for corporate IT departments to control their far-flung IT infrastructure. We expect that CA will have to match this feature set and offer additional features if it is to successfully differentiate itself from IBM's offering. It is also reasonable to assume that smaller vendors will have to meet this ante as well. From our perspective it would appear that IBM has picked a good time to expand its identity management offerings. It will be interesting to see how or if this capability will be offered as a service and if a variant will be pushed in the SMB marketplace.

3PAR Introduces 3cV

By Clay Ryder

3PAR has announced the introduction of 3cV, a blueprint for the virtual datacenter based upon the combination of the 3PAR InServ Storage Server, HP BladeSystem c-Class, and VMware Infrastructure. According to the company the modular architectures of the HP BladeSystem c-Class and the 3PAR InServ Storage Server coupled with the increased utilization provided by VMware Infrastructure and 3PAR Thin Provisioning allow organizations to reduce overall storage and server costs by 50% or more. Using VMware VMotion and Distributed

Resource Scheduler, HP Virtual Connect and Insight Control, and 3PAR Rapid Provisioning and Dynamic Optimization, customers are able to provision and re-provision physical servers, virtual hosts, and virtual arrays with tailored storage services in a matter of minutes. 3PAR states that its 3cV customers can minimize server floor space through VMware-enabled server consolidation up to 70% with HP BladeSystem density resulting in up to 50% savings. HP Thermal Logic is credited with reduced server power consumption of 30% while the 3PAR InServ Storage Server delivers twice the capacity per floor tile as compared with alternative solutions. In addition, 3PAR thin technologies, Fast RAID 5, and wide striping allow customers to power and cool as much as 75% less disk capacity for a given need. 3PAR InServ Storage Servers and the HP BladeSystem are certified solutions with VMware Infrastructure. 3PAR is a Premier-level member of the VMware Technology Alliance Partner program and HP is a Global-level VMware TAP program member. 3PAR is also a member of the HP BladeSystem Solution Builder Program and works to ensure the BladeSystem c-Class is qualified with 3PAR Utility Storage. The InServ supports remote boot of VMware Infrastructure and the HP BladeSystem. Components of 3cV are purchased separately from their respective providers or from their channel partners.

When it comes to virtualization, we believe standards are essential for the promise of virtualization to come to fruition. Typically, when we see multiple vendors working together to promote solutions that provide a surety of interactivity across the range of IT infrastructure we are heartened and applaud their efforts. In the case of 3PAR, HP, and VMware, these vendors have been focused on virtualization for some time and collectively would have much to offer to their customers. So with this mind, why does this announcement leave us in a less than excited state of mind? The answer is simple: this announcement falls short of the sort of cross-vendor solution that we believe the marketplace is expecting.

In today's lean IT environment, human and capital resources are thinly provisioned (to steal a phrase). For the most part, organizations are looking to the vendor community to help drive standards, provide vision and best practices, and offer solutions that combine technical acumen with the integration and services needed to bring said solutions up and running. This implies a high degree of vendor cooperation and keen preparation of solutions that target specific customer demographics to make the customer's investment as easy as possible to undertake while minimizing the operational and financial exposure to the organization.

In this announcement, 3cV offers a blueprint for datacenter design, some statements of certification between the discrete components, and an invitation for interested parties to buy the solution parts from the various vendors or channel partners. In an age where virtualization, power efficiency, and consolidation are rallying calls to the weary IT professional and CFO, 3cV's response seems pale. As of this writing, a quick search of the HP Website yields no mention of 3cV, and VMware's site only lists a brief mention in a blog that references the 3PAR press release. Absent evidence to the contrary, it would seem that 3PAR's 3cV is a case of preaching to the faithful. If the mentioned partners of this solution cannot muster sufficient excitement to engage at a minimum level of marketing consistency, it is difficult to imagine how 3cV will help drive interest and deployment in this collection of technology in the marketplace. This would not only be a lost opportunity, but would also set the expectation in the eyes of the uninitiated that virtualization is a piecemeal collection of technology, and as such is probably complex, and something that is only relevant/feasible for "the big guys." This would be a real shame.