



Snapshot

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Centera Compliance Edition: EMC Delivers Disk-Based Solutions for Regulated Industries

By Charles King

In this era of intense corporate scrutiny, EMC is delivering data storage solutions to help enterprises achieve new levels of compliance with stringent government regulations. The company recently announced the Centera Compliance Edition, specifically engineered to help businesses comply with long-term data retention and integrity requirements in government, financial services, healthcare, life sciences, and other regulated industries. This report discusses how EMC's latest storage offering can help enterprises achieve higher levels of data security, authenticity, and access than were previously possible.

Regulation Trends and Information Storage

Enterprise storage evolved to meet the need to store and access growing quantities of business-critical data across multiple platforms and locations. Current enterprise storage trends, however, are being shaped less by IT departments and more by events in a rapidly shifting business climate. Recent headlines regarding corporate malfeasance have helped to expose the delicate relationship between enterprise employees and enterprise data.

Increasingly, government regulations require organizations to retain certain types of information for a specific number of years. At the same time, governments require businesses to respond more quickly to requests for documents including emails pursuant to audits or other inquiries. As government agencies, associations, shareholders, and others are increasing their enforcement and scrutiny, organizations must be extremely careful about what types of data they store, how long it is stored, and how to ensure its integrity.

For example, EMC described a situation in which the Securities & Exchange Commission asked a large financial institution to produce electronic communications (email) containing any one of nineteen key words sent or received within a specified timeframe. After two months of searching around the clock, a team of eight employees had still not retrieved all the audited records stored on optical-based media. If the emails been on disk technology that protected data integrity and permitted sophisticated searches, the institution could have satisfied the governments request within a matter of hours.

Today, organizations that cannot meet these increasingly strict data storage and retrieval requirements risk huge monetary fines levied by the government and class action lawsuits from irate shareholders. Overall, these issues bespeak an evolution that requires businesses to think strategically about data storage and retrieval rather than rely on simple compliance point products.

Turning the WORM

In the battle to secure and maintain critical business information, many organizations struggle to understand, let alone comply with some 4,000 regulations in the U.S. and over 250 in Europe. Many of these regulations deal with information pertaining to government agencies while others focus on specific classes of data. For example, DOD 5015.2 is an application-specific regulation defining electronic record retention requirements in the government space, while SEC 17a-4 is a media-specific regulation created by the Securities Exchange Commission to define requirements protecting financial data. These are merely two regulations among myriad others. Since the scope of achieving regulatory compliance can be enormously broad, understanding applicable regulations is a critical issue for businesses following compliance guidelines.

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Despite clear incentives to follow these regulations (e.g., to avoid prosecution, fines and/or punishment) compliance efforts may be stymied by institutionalized thinking, confusion over the compliance requirements, and even which technology to use. This lack of clarity may prevent businesses from actively pursuing solutions that are in their and customers' best long-term interests. For example, oft-discussed WORM (Write Once Read Many) is simply a well-marketed feature of some optical media solutions, not a standard in its own right (i.e., there is no mention of WORM in any regulations, including SEC 17a-4). WORM can also be a feature of other storage technologies, not just optical.

EMC Centera Compliance Editions

EMC has designed two new high-end storage systems optimized to respond to these challenges and provide solutions geared toward regulatory compliance: Centera Compliance Edition and Centera Compliance Edition Plus. Both solutions leverage EMC's robust Centera Content Addressed Storage (CAS) solution, taking advantage of Centera's ability to address individual documents with unique identifiers based on digital "fingerprints" and specified time/date stamps to track when and how data is accessed. This is a critical functionality where regulations are enforced and historical data inquiries ensue.

Today's compliance standards cannot be met efficiently or convincingly with yesterday's storage solutions. To date, compliance has implied utilizing tape- or optical-based systems. According to EMC, the Centera Compliance Edition introduces the first disk-based storage solution on the market, offering considerable advantages over tape media management in areas including data retrieval time, management simplicity, comprehensiveness, and the ability to maintain long-term access and readability as formats change. These enhancements squarely address more stringent data recovery requirements.

The Centera Compliance Edition includes additional new functionality to manage the retention and disposition of stored content for regulated industries. Both Compliance Edition systems afford retention enforcement in metadata and data deletion enhancements (i.e., protection from deletion during retention periods). However, for those businesses concerned with the most stringent regulations Compliance Edition Plus contains all base Compliance Edition functionalities and also offers features geared specifically toward SEC Rule 17a-4, including the ability to ensure non-rewriteability and non-erasability through content addressing and retention enforcement, as well as the removal of remote access (i.e., dial-in) capabilities. Added security is afforded by a physically hardened platform in a locked down cabinet that lacks a systems operator console.

Compliance: Centera Crosses the Next Hurdle in Disk-Based Storage

The potential for regulatory-compliant storage solutions is clear and growing, from the need to securely archive millions of medical documents to the demand for email storage and document management solutions where immediacy of retrieval is key. International regulatory issues must also be taken into account, since enterprises' interests increasingly span continents and companies are responsible for ensuring smooth business information exchange with all participants and regulatory bodies.

EMC's latest Centera solutions ease the efforts required to achieve regulatory compliance via their direct interaction with applications managing the access, use, and disposition of regulated data. The Centera Compliance Edition offers record-level retention protection and auditability; content integrity; record duplication and backup; and non-overwriteable, non-erasable WORM capabilities. Collectively, it sets a new standard in business data storage that conventional competitive offerings do not or cannot meet. Businesses seeking optimized storage for regulated content would be wise to consider EMC's Centera Compliance Edition. This automated disk-based solution further buttresses EMC's history of delivering robust business information solutions that meet businesses' most stringent demands.