

IBM Focuses Storage Brand for Mid-market Customers

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

For many mid-market customers, storage offerings are perplexing. Storage vendors have focused on the complex needs of large enterprises with the result that mid-market offerings can seem too big, too complex, and too expensive for their customers' needs. Customer perception is that naming conventions make offerings seem confusing, and it is not always clear which pieces work together. Along with new offerings to meet changing mid-market requirements, IBM are re-positioning their mid-market line to help demonstrate that in fact they have the right products in the right configurations at the right price point for customer needs.

Navigating Mid-market Storage

IBM are simplifying their brand strategy. Over the years, the company has clarified and simplified its brand strategy for servers, and now they're taking on storage. This should be especially good news for mid-market customers who often find they have to wade through a profusion of naming conventions and products without always understanding how these products are meant to work together. In addition, while the midrange products originally known as the FAStT line continue to be a bestseller for IBM, some customers have felt that the smallest company or workgroup needs have been neglected. To tackle these issues, IBM have announced some naming simplifications, some new products specifically for the mid-market, and some announcements of product capabilities that should make mid-market customers happier to put IBM on their short list of storage suppliers.

A Rose by Any Other Name

To begin with, IBM are unifying its disk products under the TotalStorage DS Family and changing the name of the disk arrays. The FAStT product line, which is the cornerstone of their mid-market offering, will become the foundation of the TotalStorage DS Family. The former FAStT100 through FAStT900 will now be the DS4100 through the DS4500. In addition, IBM have announced the introduction of two new entry level workgroup systems, the TotalStorage DS300 and DS400. The DS300 is an iSCSI box that holds up to 2TB of data and is designed for workgroups, small data centres, or branch offices. The DS400 is a similar box but supports fibre channel technology and scales to 5.8TB. These new products give the product an even greater range of entry points for mid-market companies. For larger mid-market firms, the issues are different. IT managers seeking products here are looking for the best combination of functionality and price. For these customers, IBM have created a specific bundle to provide high availability and flexibility at an affordable price. IBM have created the high availability bundle, which includes the DS4300 (aka FAStT600), the SAN Volume Controller, and the SAN Switch. This combination provides capabilities for high availability at an affordable price by taking advantage of IBM's virtualization technology combined with its popular FAStT600 product. Finally, IBM continue to provide the latest technology to customers who want the functionality of large systems without all the capacity. IBM is introducing Global Copy and Global Mirroring on its DS4000 series, which allows high-speed remote replication. They are announcing the capability to provide both Serial ATA and Fibre Channel arrays intermixed behind the same DS4000 series controllers so that customers can create truly tiered storage environments.

Mid-Market Storage Revealed

IBM's announcements of new products combined with the simplification of product naming and organization means that mid-market customers should be able to find solutions they need at price points they require without a Magic 8 Ball. Customers looking for entry-level storage can check out the DS300/400 depending on their disk technology needs. Customers with higher end environments will find a high-availability package priced for their needs. Customers with storage requirements that require multi-tier storage will find that IBM have products that work together to provide solutions they need.

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