

Hammer Storage Pounds Out 'Disruptive' 1TB Appliance

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The new device resembles a microwave oven, offers remote access and provides the functionality of a network storage device at a price that may boggle some minds.

Consumer/small-office storage vendor Hammer Storage on March 22 introduced a new appliance resembling a microwave oven that provides 1TB of data storage - for a retail price of \$499.

The appliance, called Myshare 1TB, is the first release in a new product line now being developed by Hammer, a division of Bell Microproducts. Myshare comes with two SATA II hard drives along with two USB ports to centralize printers and external hard drives, a company spokesperson said.

Myshare offers remote access via IP/TCP ports; all content stored on the unit can be made accessible from anywhere through a Web GUI. Selective access to sharing folders can be set up by the administrator.

When used as a network storage appliance, Myshare can be accessed whether or not the computers are on, the spokesperson said. It plugs into the network through a gigabit interface and can sit under any home router or switch, eliminating the need for externally attached storage, add-on internal disk drives, removable media, print servers and remote storage.

Myshare comes with RAID levels 0, 1 and JBOD software to provide

protection choices, such as mirroring data. Content stored on Myshare is secured from online intruders with SSL certificates and can be configured with multiple user and group permissions.

For small businesses with a domain server, Myshare can tie into the domain, thus enabling the use of the same password and access that is already in place.

"We've tested the Hammer products in our test labs, and they're great quality - they're bulletproof," said Jon Toigo, an independent storage analyst and consultant who blogs at the popular storage analysis site, DrunkenData.com .

"Bell Microproducts - the parent company of Hammer - distributes 70 percent of all the hard drives in the world outside of PCs," Toigo said. "They work with Seagate, HP, EMC, IBM - all the major companies. They can use their vast resources to build their own inexpensive storage unit like this.

"The cabinets are really pretty ... they look pretty enough for the home consumer, but they have enough scalability and capacity to go into more fashionable business offices as well."

Wireless access to all content

When connected to a wireless router, Myshare allows laptop users to access content or print without plugging in. Users can also back up their files, photos and other data wirelessly to a Myshare unit.

Myshare enables users to share digital content within the home and among different computer platforms, including PC, Mac and Linux workstations. Content trapped in an individual computer becomes available to all those connected to the home network, the spokesperson

said.

Once plugged into Myshare, USB printers and storage devices - including flash memory sticks - can also be shared over the home network, the spokesperson said.

"Digital home storage needs are growing exponentially, and this trend is creating a real demand for affordable, simple network storage solutions that offer ease-of-use that is similar to that found in common household appliances," said Jerry Kagele, Bell Microproducts' president of North American distribution, said in San Jose, Calif.

Myshare is designed as a plug-and-play device - users can simply plug it into a router and begin storing and sharing immediately, the spokesperson said. While other network storage devices require that software be installed on each computer, Myshare does not. A one button feature copies files from another storage device or digital camera directly into a Myshare folder.

Why Myshare is disruptive - especially in the channel

The Hammer Myshare is disruptive to the sales channel in a big way, Toigo said.

"It's disruptive and revolutionary in the sense that most distributors in the market are hesitant to go head-to-head with their channel partners," Toigo said. "Bell derives an enormous amount of money from distributing pre-made systems that come out of EMC and folks like that. And now they're in direct competition with them with their own array products. That is a fundamental shift."

Major-name storage vendors typically mark their arrays up tremendously - as much as 3000 percent in some cases, Toigo said.

"I think the Bell approach makes a hell of a lot of sense for a lot of reasons - for consumers, it's extremely beneficial," Toigo said. "When you look at the cost to manufacture a 20TB array, it's about \$5,200. When a tier 2 vendor - I'm talking about anybody who isn't a three-letter acronym - comes to market with a 2TB array, you're talking about anywhere between \$17,000 and \$20,000 by the time it reaches the customer.

"When a name-brand vendor - with a three-letter acronym - gets a hold of it, you can add a '1' in front of that," Toigo added.

Certainly, big-name vendors contend they have better maintenance, support and value-add functionality to go with their higher prices, he said.

"The fact of the matter is, at that price point, I can afford to replace the unit with a brand new one if anything were to go wrong," Toigo said.

"And the value-add functionality can all be bought from third-party vendors. It's all taking advantage of SATA and SAS standards, which are de facto standards at this point."

Toigo said he has a client that is a large telecommunications company, and they were complaining recently to him that they have to pay the licenses for all their EMC software, yet they end up using only 10 percent of the functionality.

"But they still have to pay the license fees annually - on 100 percent of the functionality," Toigo said. "So when is value-add not adding value? The guy said, 'You know it'd be really great if we could just buy the basic box from a reputable manufacturer, who'd then service and support it without any problem, and then we could cobble together, from all the available software out there, those specific functions that we really need.

"And that's what this platform - Myshare - allows you to do."

Toigo said he never "takes - consulting - money" from companies whose products he analyzes.

Myshare, priced at \$499, is available now at retail stores, online retailers, and directly from the Hammer Storage Web site .

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