

IBM Rolls Out Reconfigured Midtier Systems, New Services

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Using its own off-the-shelf hardware, Big Blue is pre-packaging midtier storage system software and letting customers pick and choose what configurations they want up front.

IBM on April 16 announced two recycled entry-level storage systems and a spate of services to go with them on the first day of Storage Networking World, one of the data storage industry's largest conferences of the year.

The new storage packages are actually enhanced configurations of the IBM System Storage DS3200 and DS3400, which are entry-level disk arrays that feature management software aimed at non-IT experts at small and midsize businesses, as well as large enterprise customers with remote offices.

The new offerings are part of a clear trend: companies that had been supplying hardware, software and services formerly aimed at high-end enterprises but have scaled them slightly to meet the performance and price points of midtier-size companies (100 to 1,000 employees).

Various components of the DS3200 and DS3400, such as controllers, cables and HBAs (host bus adapters), now are pre-bundled into specific configurations, making it easier for SMBs to purchase the system that best suits their business needs, a company spokesperson said.

"Today's configuration enhancements to the DS3000 Series will make

purchasing and implementing such a system easier, so that our clients can focus on their business priorities," said Charlie Andrews, director of IBM's system storage product marketing.

Four news service offerings

On the services side, IBM introduced four new offerings from its global technology services group. They are:

- IBM Implementation Services for Enterprise Content Management, which allow clients to effectively use IBM's Content Manager, CommonStore for Mail and Records Manager.
- IBM Storage Optimization and Integration Services, which help clients design a storage environment that is easier to manage, more cost-effective and more efficiently uses existing storage resources.
- IBM Migration Services for Data, which helps migrate clients' data to IBM NAS (network-attached storage) systems.
- IBM has assembled, through the recent acquisition of Softek, unified data mobility offerings and worldwide delivery expertise for managing data in storage array, host and virtualized information technology environments.

"With the DS3000 series, IBM has packaged this with the necessary cables and HBAs to be installed in the server - this makes it easy for customers, since they do not have to determine which HBAs to purchase," Dianne McAdam, analyst with The Clipper Group in Wellesley, Mass., told eWEEK.

"Also, IBM has provided management software that makes it easy to install and manage these products," she added.

The IBM channel is "bullish on these solutions and will sell and support them with confidence to SMB customers," IDC analyst Tony Asaro told eWEEK.

"The DS3000 and DS4000 series have a great customer traction and proven value to the customers," Asaro said. "IBM is one of the vendors best suited to address the SMB storage market because of their brand, support capability - many of these companies are already IBM customers - and their channel."

IBM "responding to market dynamics"

IBM is responding to some market dynamics that make quick, low-cost delivery of product easier to accomplish, John Webster of Illuminata told eWEEK.

"The SMB segment is all about low cost, quick delivery, ease of use and supply chain efficiency. That in a nutshell explains these offerings," Webster said.

Why is it, Webster was asked, that all the major companies - IBM, HP, EMC, NetApp, Sun - seem to be focusing only on new products for SMBs?

"I don't agree that all the major companies are focusing only on SMBs," Webster said. "Nonetheless, the major growth opportunity for storage vendors is in SMB. It's traditionally been a tough nut to crack for the enterprise storage players because SMB buying patterns are different from what they're used to at the enterprise level."

The newly configured IBM System Storage DS3000 series products are currently available at a starting price of \$4,200. The new storage services are currently available from IBM Global Technology Services.

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