Moonwalk Releases Data Management Suite, Sans Middleware

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The Australian company dispenses with tiered or hierarchical approaches and goes its own route with a completely new storage architecture.

Moonwalk, an Australia-based creator of what it calls "all-inclusive data management and protection software," made its U.S. debut April 11 with the introduction of its Moonwalk 6.0 software suite.

Moonwalk's software uses no middleware, yet automates and proactively manages the migration, copying and movement of data transparently throughout the enterprise, CEO Peter Harvey told eWEEK.

Moonwalk, based in Milton, Australia, dispenses with tiered or hierarchical storage approaches and SRM (storage resource management) applications that merely provide visibility into storage usage.

"We see a huge touchpoint across all markets, but especially in the SMB - small and midsize business - space," Harvey told eWEEK. "The reason being is that the concept of all-inclusive data management technology hasn't been implemented because of the complexity and costs of putting it into the middleware, for ongoing management.

"What we've come up with is a totally new architecture that has no middleware, you just load and go with it. It reduces many of the obstacles and impediments to putting a data management strategy and

structure in place in the organization."

Moonwalk is comprised of one platform "that will scale from your PC to your enterprise," Harvey said. "It's enterprise-type software that just runs. As long as we see a file system, we play."

Moonwalk combines user-defined classification and migration policies for data management with metadata-level precision for all information on network storage, servers and clients, Harvey said.

Developed to manage the movement of data between primary storage and lower-cost devices, Moonwalk also provides operating system-agnostic data classification and intelligent management of all enterprise files, regardless of file type, across all major file systems, including Windows, Unix, Linux and Netware environments.

Moonwalk's stateless architecture requires no additional overhead and is completely transparent to users and applications, with no introduced points of potential failure, Harvey said.

Abstracts the data management system

"This is an abstract data management system," Harvey said. "We've decoupled the components that traditionally relate to hierarchical management systems ... we have a central management point that can sit on a PC or laptop, from there the rules are created, and they delegate out to the network. The actual 'action' is carried out by agents that sit out on target servers."

When a file is migrated from one location to another, something called a "stub" is left behind in the primary environment - so it's a "stubbing" technology, Harvey said.

"The logical data is preserved, so it's totally transparent to the application - there's no shortcuts, no extensions. All the information about the migrated file is in the metadata," Harvey said.

"We've abstracted everything, so we have the stub data object and the migrated file data object with this symbiotic relationship. The file knows all about the stub, the stub knows all about the file. So we have these two objects sitting out there, just waiting for something to action them."

These extremely small footprint agents, each with its own NFS client, are installed on enterprise servers to execute the policies as scheduled from a centralized management location. These agents are very lightweight - for example, 1MB for NSS, 4MBs for Windows - and are installed quickly and simply throughout the network.

The agents can then stream the files directly between locations as instructed without any intervention or staging. The software is so non-disruptive that it takes only about an hour for an average Moonwalk installation to be fully operational, Harvey said

Moonwalk 6.0 migrates, copies and moves data according to user-defined rules and policies based on criteria such as age, size, file type, file name, file creator and many more granular classification rules.

Harvey said that the software is not intended to displace enterprise backup and recovery software, and is compatible with every leading backup solution. With Moonwalk, applying even one simple rule of moving all files one year or older onto secondary storage can typically result in an immediate halving in primary storage, he said.

Saving significant storage space

A more tightly managed structure, consisting of a combination of

common rules and very precise rules relating to specific user attributes, delivers significantly higher capacity savings of 70 to 90 percent, Harvey said.

"If Moonwalk's technology has not blown your mind and made you rethink all of your assumptions about how enterprise data management should be conducted, then you just haven't spent enough time with the software yet," said Brad O'Neill, senior analyst with Taneja Group.

"Any customer who deploys Moonwalk and puts it through its paces will eventually come to the same conclusions that I have: the stateless, decentralized, self-managing efficiency and performance of Moonwalk is a sneak peek into distributed enterprise data management, circa 2012. With a patent portfolio to prove it, I believe Moonwalk has delivered a very core enterprise technology with significant implications for migration, recovery, data replication, and disaster recovery."

Harvey said that the company's ultimate goal with Moonwalk 6.0 was to build a powerful, yet intelligible, automated software architecture that runs in the background to cut back on primary disk requirements and make the most of an enterprise's existing storage infrastructure.

"We developed the Moonwalk architecture to accommodate critical data protection capabilities, a number of which will be announced over the next few months.

Pricing and availability

Moonwalk 6.0 starts at $4,000 per node, depending on configuration specs. For exact pricing and availability, please e-mail info@moonwalkinc.com

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