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STORAGE

<< Storage

Addressing the storage requirements of the SMB

ADRIAN HOLLIER, CHANNEL MANAGER, COMZTEK

COMZTEK press release issued by: TEXT 100 PUBLIC RELATIONS

By Adrian Hollier, Comztek Channel Manager

[Johannesburg, 2 June 2008] - All businesses, whether large or small, have the same basic storage requirements - a resolution for the ever-increasing amount of data and the management of data across multiple servers or computers. Additionally, the storage concerns of price versus performance, reliability and scalability, are shared.

Small and medium businesses (SMBs), whose storage requirements often mirror those of a larger enterprise, have neither dedicated IT personnel to deal with data management challenges, nor big budgets to construct complex IT solutions. These businesses are therefore on the lookout for easy, efficient and cost-effective solutions for data storage, as well as simplified storage management.

Previously, storage solutions were designed with only the large enterprises in mind. Today, vendors have a number of products, ranging from cost-effective, scalable entry-level solutions to large enterprise storage solutions. In addition, vendors now tailor storage solutions to each of the customers' requirements, with growth potential in mind.

Most vendors are therefore now able to provide SMB customers with a foundation of the storage solutions similar to that of large corporations, with scalability that will accommodate growth without requiring a complete upgrade later on. The storage solutions tailored for SMBs, but which are not confined to this single market, offer everything from direct-attached storage (storage directly attached to the computer processor) to storage area networks (storage on a dedicated network) and network-attached storage (storage attached to a TCP/IP-based network). The choice for the SMB is simply determined by which function the company requires the storage solution to perform.

In my experience, a company's storage requirements will grow an average of 300% per annum. Because it is difficult to accurately plan for such changes, implementing a flexible, centralised storage solution is often more profitable, so that in the event of a business change, the company has the ability to move storage away from non-critical servers to where it's required.

Generally, SMBs do not have the appropriate technical know-how and cannot afford large, highly skilled in-house IT departments. Therefore to derive the most benefit from their information technology, SMBs should ideally view resellers as trusted advisors - equipped with the knowledge of alternative choices in storage and the skills to help them maximise their investments.

While we have seen a steady growth in the number of resellers servicing the SMB sector, we are acutely aware of the challenge of maintaining a highly skilled workforce. This ongoing demand for highly trained IT staff is further compounded by the prohibitive cost of training. While larger distributors are working to find adequate solutions through technical services and support divisions, there is still much work to be done.

Although the storage market hasn't undergone a major evolution as seen in other areas of information technology, what has changed is the way in which the market addresses storage. On this cusp of change, customers are forced, through necessity, to re-evaluate how they approach their most basic storage requirements to remain competitive. It is therefore critical that the market assist SMBs with solutions that are not only cost-effective, but will also offer adequate growth potential.

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