Data storage management

Information must be accessible and secure at the same time.   **Interviewed by Jason Lloyd**

Network administrators face difficult challenges when dealing with storage management. As businesses grow and evolve, data and the ways to collect it become more complex. As a result, the need for proper storage management becomes even more critical.

"Today's businesses are highly dependent on their data," says Dan Wilson, a technical manager for Perpetual Technologies Inc. "As a business grows over time, so does the amount of data and storage required to maintain that information."

Smart Business spoke with Wilson about the importance of storage management.

What is storage management?

Storage management is a series of policies, processes and tools that an organization employs to optimize and organize its storage resources across the enterprise. It addresses storage resources, data integrity, performance, capacity and disaster recovery.

Why is storage management valuable?

Data is a crucial component in every company. As a business grows over time, so does the amount of data and storage required to maintain that information. Vendors are fully aware of this and have offered solutions to both manage the volume of data and the costs associated with this growth.

Storage tiers are an example of these solutions. A business can place its most important and/or active data on a high-end Storage Area Network (SAN) and place *less* important and/or active data on less expensive storage devices. The data is accessible to the business applications regardless of where it physically resides. Tiers such as this can save an organization money as well as allow it to meet its operational requirements and Service Level Agreements.

Vendors offer virtualization support that

Dan Wilson
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enables various storage devices from competing vendors to be managed as a pool of storage. These tools will have a major impact on the storage market. Businesses should strongly consider using these tools when designing or enhancing their storage management approach.

How can a company improve its storage management?

First, I would ask them to assess their storage needs to determine if their current policies and technology are serving them. There must be a process by which they will evaluate their current storage costs with the true business value of the data. A question such as, 'Are we storing old and hardly used data on our high-end storage devices?' would be logical to ask. An enterprise-wide, capacity-planning effort would help to align storage costs with the businesses' priorities.

How does security factor in?

While everybody seems to be discussing security regarding the organizations

servers and networks, there is a lack of attention being given to storage devices. Information spends the majority of its time on some storage device, such as a SAN. If someone was to make an unauthorized change to the data or find a way to make that data or storage device(s) unavailable, a business could suffer financially as well as legally, to say the least.

Personnel responsible for security must understand each and every component in the enterprise to make certain that everything is being done to ensure adequate security measures are in place. If a component is not being measured or monitored, then it is not being properly managed.

Storage management should be on the minds of every CIO or CTO. On top of what exists today, newer devices like smarter cell phones, PDAs and digital cameras are being delivered to the market place. These devices enable people to collect data in ways that did not exist until recently. This data needs to be processed and stored as information. Each business should classify its data and determine the true business value in order to meet current and future needs.

What data is kept? How it is stored? For how long? What must a business do to comply with legal and business obligations? How will the data be used and by whom? The answers to these and numerous other questions depend on an organization's approach to storage management and the technology surrounding it. It helps an organization determine how it can successfully manage ever growing amounts of information.

Technology exists today giving managers everything they need to deal effectively and efficiently with their data. Building and maintaining confidence in business systems is a critical goal for any manager. Properly addressing storage management will go a long way toward achieving that goal.

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