

## Appliances Multiply at SNW

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Compared to earlier years, a noticeable shift at this week's Storage Networking World (SNW) show was the number of vendors hawking storage appliances. This trend seems to be driven by the rise of the small and mid-sized enterprise (SME) sector as a burgeoning storage market and the desire to simplify branch office computing.

"Storage appliances are becoming commonplace due to their ease of use, simplified management and rapid implementation," says Laura Buckley, vice president of product development at StorServer. "We target SMEs, where there is typically no time to learn and implement new technologies."

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, dozens of appliances filled the Expo aisles at SNW.

The appliances address a variety of data needs and functions. Some are extremely simple, others more advanced. As a result, Mike Karp, an analyst with Enterprise Management Associates, questions whether many of them actually qualify as appliances in the strict sense of the term. But Karp's definition might be a useful one for any user looking to select an appropriate product.

"An appliance should operate like a toaster," says Karp. "It should be defined as a device that accomplishes one thing well, is simple to use, and can be installed in 15 minutes."

Here's a look at a few possibilities.

### Arkeia Holds Down the Fort

Arkeia Software announced the EdgeFort appliance for federated data protection for remote offices and mid-sized businesses. It includes Arkeia Network Backup V6.1 software along with disks, an integrated tape drive, virtual tape library (VTL), encryption and client software. Integrated RAID 1 disk is inside for near-line data storage and rapid recovery.

"This is the first all-in-one appliance from a backup software vendor," says Dave Elliott, Arkeia's vice president of marketing. "EdgeFort removes the complexity of purchasing, configuring and managing a backup server, a tape drive and all of the related management software."

It can be used by an SME at one location, or deployed across multiple sites. All that is required is an EdgeFort unit at headquarters and further appliances at each location. With that infrastructure in place, one storage administrator can rapidly control all backups, with no need for external IT staff. According to Elliot, it is priced

at less than \$3,000 for a smaller unit and \$5,000 to \$7,000 for a larger box. It will be broadly available this summer.

### **Nexsan's Next Appliance**

The Assureon NX Easy Archive Appliance by Nexsan Technologies does e-mail archiving, document management and e-discovery. It can also be used to replicate data across the WAN for disaster recovery purposes — provided an NX+ box is installed at a remote facility. It comes with 3.75 TB of usable capacity.

"The Assureon NX is a purpose-built, disk-based archive that can be used as a digital vault for documents, e-mail, images, recordings, etc.," says Brendan Kinkade, Nexsan's vice president of marketing. "It is delivered as a plug-and-play package and is designed to be installed by a user in under one hour."

This appliance runs file integrity checks automatically, [de-duplication](#) and prevents overwriting of files once written to disk. Digital fingerprint technology is used to authenticate records and prevent tampering. Pricing begins at \$53,000.

### **Giving Files Attune Up**

File virtualization is another zone that fits the appliance model. Attune Systems has plenty of customers for its Maestro File Manager FM5500 appliance. Pricing begins at around \$40,000.

The in-band appliance creates a [virtualization](#) layer between file servers and the clients or applications accessing them. As a result, content can be moved around seamlessly and a shared storage pool can be created using servers and [NAS](#) boxes.

"We virtualize files on Windows systems and optimize file server or NAS filer resources," says Daniel Liddle, vice president of marketing at Attune.

### **Storewiz Packs It In**

Storewiz hits a different market with its STN-6000 series. The appliance targets the data compression space. It has no moving parts and sits in band between the core switch and filer head. Compression is done in real time at a rate of around five to one. Note, too, that compression is done before data is stored, in contrast to solutions that typically compress data which is being transmitted over the WAN.

"We don't touch the metadata and have zero performance hit," says Michael Hoerr, sales manager at Storewiz. "This appliance shrinks the amount of data that needs to be stored on disk or tape."

For throughput of 100 MB/sec, it costs \$22,000. Up to 500 MB/sec speeds are available.

### **Simple StorServer**

"It's Simple" is the message in big print in the brochures of StorServer. The company has developed a series of appliances to eliminate the management complexity from storage.

"With our devices, you don't have to select the server, the storage array, the tape library or the backup software," says Buckley. "There is also no finger pointing, as we support every function."

The company's Business Continuity Appliance, for example, comprises a full suite of integrated backup, archive and data recovery functions. At the low end, the Micro Series has a capacity of 300 GB to 30 TB. Pricing starts at around \$20,000. Other units range up to the Enterprise Series (around \$200,000), which provides up to 108 TB.

The appliance arrives on site product-ready and is plugged into the network. Client software is installed on related systems. Backup and archive data flows from local or network storage into the appliance. Data is then copied to be sent offsite for DR purposes.

The company even offers a [SAN](#) appliance. By partnering with Compellent, it has created the StorServer SAN appliance. This combination provides thin provisioning, remote replication, continuous snapshots and tiered storage within a SAN architecture — but made simple enough that an SME customer can just plug it in.

The latest product addresses the upsurge in VMware Consolidated Backup (VCB) adoption. The StorServer VCB appliance removes the hassle from VCB administration. There is no need to set up proxy servers, configure VCB or perform other repetitive tasks. However, it only backs up VMware ESX servers with their storage in a SAN. Pricing is slightly higher than the company's other appliances.

## **Intel Hybrid**

Though more of a file server than an appliance, the Intel Storage Server SSR212MC2 deserves a mention. This 12-drive ([SAS](#) or [SATA](#)) quad-core Xeon machine boasts high-performance features that make it a very useful option for small companies running multiple applications or systems. Pricing starts at \$3,600.

"Rather than having multiple servers and machines, an SMB customer can achieve a lot with this quad-core box," says Dinesh Rao, product line marketing specialist for Intel's storage group. "It has very high I/O, as RAID is processed on the chip."

It comes with a wealth of software options. FalconStor, Open-E, Open SuSE, Red Hat, Wasabi Systems and Microsoft have been working closely with Intel to ensure their software runs well on this server. Windows Unified Data Storage Server by Microsoft, for example, is designed to integrate well with the Intel SSR212MC2.

As data and its importance continue to grow for small businesses, expected the proliferation of storage appliances to continue.