

SCI StorInt™ Dispatch

EMC's New Celerra NX4 product

Today, EMC announced their Celerra NX4, a new integrated low-end unified storage appliance based on their AX4 backend and Celerra system software for the SMB market.

NX4 product

The SMB market is receiving lots of interest as EMC has captured significant success with their current NAS product line. For example, their NS20 series products has led the charge by growing EMC's NAS business over 50% year over year for the last two quarters. This latest addition, the NX4, takes their NAS product line even lower into the \$20K to \$50K price range, much below the current NS20 price point. NX4 is generally available and started shipping August 26th.

The NX4 offers a unified storage model with support for storage using CIFS, NFS, iSCSI and FC protocols. For CIFS, NFS and iSCSI the NX4 comes standard with up to 8-IP ports and customers can elect to separately license an additional 4-FC access ports for FC storage access. The NX4 supports one or two blades, for high availability. It also supplies a maximum of 16TB of usable storage per blade and up to 60-1 TB SATA drives for two blades, providing a maximum raw capacity of 60TB. The NX4 starts out at approximately \$20,000 (USD list price) for a single blade system that comes with 4 TBs of SATA storage, CIFS, iSCSI and SnapSure functionality.

In addition, NX4 also supports the Celerra Startup Assistant, which allows easy customer installation and quick configuration of the system supporting data services within 15 minutes of power on. Celerra systems also provide automatic volume management, snapshots, and thin provisioning at no extra charge. Moreover, NX4 like all Celerra products support VMware activity through any of the storage access modes and supports VMware Site Recovery Manager utilizing Celerra IP replication services. NX4 also supports NDMP backup services.

NX4's backend Clariion AX4 is directly connected to the NAS head via FC. If the customer elects to use FC storage for open systems hosts they can be direct or SAN attached to the AX4 backend storage. The AX4 offers both SAS and SATA drives in the same shelf and supports up to 12 drives per shelf. The NX4 uses Navisphere® Express to configure AX4 storage for SAN usage.

Also, the NX4 is primarily intended to be a channel delivered product. As such, EMC has provided online configurators, ordering tools and quick start training. In addition, EMC has selected best practice configurations that can be customized for many common applications. The NX4 can also be sold by EMC's direct sales force but given its low price and compensation level, fulfillment will likely be through channel partners. EMC mentioned DELL, CDW and a number of others that are current channel partners, which plan to offer this product.

Finally, the NX4 is positioned against NetApp's FAS2020 but offers better raw NFS performance, better price performance, and better TCO over a 3-year timeframe. Also, EMC announced enhancements to the NS20 product that now supports up to 90 drives. Additionally, EMC released new information showing that the NS20 increased NFS performance, supplied better price performance, and provided a better 3-year TCO over their competitors FAS2050 storage product.

Announcement significance

The SMB market suffers from a proliferation of isolated, direct attached storage within servers and file servers. With NX4's new price point for unified storage, SMB customers can now take advantage of low cost advanced shared storage via NAS or iSCSI and when requirements dictate, move up to FC storage access within the same system. Shared storage eases the administrative burden, backup licensing and numerous other issues brought on by isolated server storage.

The SMB storage market is getting more competitive. Up until now NetApp and few others had this category to themselves but with NX4, this market is about to get much more crowded.

Finally, both EMC and NetApp seem to be searching for a storage sweet spot somewhere beneath \$50K. As a result, file storage is undergoing a rapid and irreversible change to reduced cost and increased functionality, which in the end can only benefit SMB customers.

Silverton Consulting, Inc. is a Storage, Strategy & Systems consulting services company, based in the USA offering products and services to the data storage community.