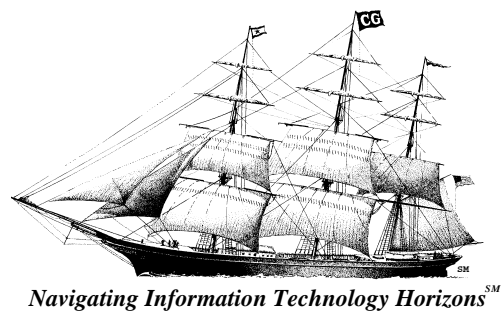


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NetApp Reinforces Its Position In the Data Center with DAFS

Analyst: Michael Fisch

Management Summary

Network Appliance (NetApp) recently announced support for Direct Access File Systems (DAFS)¹, a new high-speed protocol for file access. DAFS allows applications to bypass the operating system during data transfer, which means more speedy access and less consumption of the server processor. That's a good thing – it improves application response times and enables users to be more productive. It also lets existing servers do more work and thereby save on upgrades and additional software licenses. **The bottom line is that DAFS means lower costs and improved productivity, especially if your transaction/database activity is growing.**

Furthermore, there is a broader message reinforced by this announcement – namely, that NetApp is a serious player in the data center. This was not always the case. In earlier days, NetApp mainly sold network-attached storage (NAS) filers at the departmental and workgroup level. These special-purpose appliances delivered performance with quick and easy installation. It was (and is) a nice solution for this market. But NetApp had greater ambitions. It wanted to earn a significant place in that mighty citadel – the enterprise data center.

The necessary passport to the data center is a solution that delivers the utmost in performance, availability, and scalability. So NetApp set out to steadily improve its products along these dimensions. It developed local and remote data replication as well as clustering for full redundancy and failover. It achieved scalability by increasing capacity – now 18 TB in an F880c filer cluster – and creating DataFabric Manager to centrally administer all NetApp filers and NetCache and NearStore appliances in the enterprise. For performance, it added multiple Gigabit Ethernet ports, faster processors, dual Pentium III configurations, and integration with popular database applications. The market responded positively by deploying NetApp for mission-critical applications – in the data center.

And now NetApp is the first to offer a commercially-available DAFS storage product. **Their tests show that it can deliver faster application performance than even SAN-attached and direct-attached storage**, and the industry standard TPC-C benchmark demonstrated that NetApp's DAFS solution offered the best price/performance for a Unix-based system.² Impressive.

This adds further credibility to NetApp's non-traditional path into the data center as an appliance vendor. Rivals like EMC and Hitachi started there by offering monolithic, multi-protocol disk arrays. They shrugged off NetApp's approach as unconvincing. After all, a tightly-integrated, specialized appliance simply isn't, well, big enough. But at the end of the day, it's about performance, regardless of the path taken. Results are results, and with DAFS support, NetApp takes another step up the performance curve.

Take note: With DAFS, NetApp has reinforced its growing position in the data center. **Enterprises that want to boost performance of their mission-critical database and transaction-processing applications should look at DAFS support from NetApp.**



¹ See www.dafscollaborative.org for more information on DAFS.

² See www.tpc.org for details on the benchmark.

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Michael Fisch is a Senior Analyst with the Clipper Group. He brings over six years of experience in marketing and engineering at computer hardware and software manufacturers. Mr. Fisch worked at EMC Corporation as a marketing program manager focused on service providers and as a market analyst. Before that, he worked in international channel development, manufacturing, and technical support at Extended Systems, Inc. Mr. Fisch earned an MBA from Babson College and a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Idaho.

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