THE CLIPPER GROUP
Navigator™
Navigating Information Technology Horizons℠
Published Since 1993 April 15, 2002

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.

About The Clipper Group, Inc.

The Clipper Group, Inc., is an independent consulting firm specializing in acquisition decisions and strategic advice regarding complex, enterprise-class information technologies. Our team of industry professionals averages more than 25 years of real-world experience. A team of staff consultants augments our capabilities, with significant experience across a broad spectrum of applications and environments.

- ***The Clipper Group can be reached at (781) 235-0085 and found on the web at www.clipper.com.***

About the Author

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.

- ***Reach Michael Fisch via e-mail at MFisch@clipper.com or at (781) 235-0085 Ext. 25.***

Regarding Trademarks and Service Marks

The Clipper Group Navigator, **The Clipper Group Explorer**, **The Clipper Group Observer**, **The Clipper Group** Captain's Log**,** and *"clipper.com"* are trademarks of The Clipper Group, Inc., and the clipper ship drawings, *"Navigating Information Technology Horizons"*, and *"teraproductivity"* are service marks of The Clipper Group, Inc. The Clipper Group, Inc., reserves all rights regarding its trademarks and service marks. All other trademarks, etc., belong to their respective owners.

Disclosure

Officers and/or employees of The Clipper Group may own as individuals, directly or indirectly, shares in one or more companies discussed in this bulletin. Company policy prohibits any officer or employee from holding more than one percent of the outstanding shares of any company covered by The Clipper Group. The Clipper Group, Inc., has no such equity holdings.

Regarding the Information in this Issue

The Clipper Group believes the information included in this report to be accurate. Data has been received from a variety of sources, which we believe to be reliable, including manufacturers, distributors, or users of the products discussed herein. The Clipper Group, Inc., cannot be held responsible for any consequential damages resulting from the application of information or opinions contained in this report.

Copyright © 2002 by The Clipper Group, Inc. Reproduction prohibited without advance written permission. All rights reserved.