



## Do-Si-Do Your Competitor — Enterprises Call the Storage Dance

Analyst: Anne MacFarland

In a square dance, you dance with people other than the partner you start with. The *do-si-do*, in particular, is an engagement that can be accomplished without touching or even looking at each other. Today, a do-si-do occurred, called for by the mainframe customers who use both IBM ESS *Shark* and EMC *Symmetrix* arrays in their environments. **In response to these customer demands, EMC and IBM have announced an agreement to extend interoperability and compatibility for high-end storage systems, service and software.** We hope that the framework of this agreement sets the stage, more generally, for increased cooperation between key enterprise vendors.

IBM and EMC have set up a framework to drive implementation of the following:

- **An exchange of SMI-type “hooks”** (awaiting ratification) **that will allow SMI-based unified management of both ESS Sharks and DMX Symmetrix arrays.** This exchange may be expanded, over time, to include EMC's *CLARiiON* and IBM's *FAS*St** mid-range arrays.
- **An exchange of CLIs (Command Line Interfaces)** so that the storage management products of both companies will immediately and effectively give the storage management software of both vendors operational knowledge of ESS *Shark* and *Symmetrix* functionalities.
- **An improvement in the knowledge base underpinning IBM's and EMC's support services,** accomplished through shared technical information, cross training and other initiatives. Here, the goal is clear, virtuous and very valuable – the elimination of finger pointing. How it will be achieved, in a timely fashion, will be fascinating to watch.
- **Licensing by EMC of IBM's *PPRC*, *XRC*, *Flash Copy* and *PAV* for use on *DMX Symmetrix* arrays in mainframe environments.** This makes EMC compatibility with these products simpler, but does not change the energetic competition between EMC and IBM's replication products.

All of the customers of these big arrays will benefit from more effective management of heterogeneous storage environments. **Taking away the burden of undiagnosable incompatibilities will allow the products of both companies to be compared on merits, not on the sources of risk that they might introduce to the environment.** It will simplify the buying decisions, no matter who supplies what.

There are other consequences as well. This agreement will make the high-end storage environment more consistently describable. Both IBM and EMC hope that their agreement will accelerate completion of the SMI specification, which will bring even more neatness and coherence to larger storage array market. **By getting their high-end house in order first, EMC and IBM will gain an edge in the free-for-all that may occur once SMI is finalized and takes hold upon the industry.**

It is not clear what customers should anticipate and how soon. **This was a do-si-do, not a meeting of minds – and valuable as such.** Interactions between competitors are never easy, and guarded-yet-functional relationships are even harder to initiate. **If this agreement builds out the ecosystem of competitive cooperation beyond slow-moving standards committees, it will have value far beyond the immediate alleviation of customer pain.** The absence of rancor will be welcomed by all.



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