



## Nimbus Focuses on Networked Storage for Small- and Mid-Scale Operations

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### Focus Works

There is something to be said about focus. A person can be either a jack-of-all-trades or master of one. The difference is applying oneself to a narrow set of objectives in order to excel. Sometimes the hardest thing is to decide what *not* to do. **Companies that focus tend to produce better products for their target customers.** Think of Starbucks versus a typical diner for coffee drinks, or Federal Express versus the post office for overnight package delivery.

The storage vendor Nimbus Data Systems of San Francisco has also chosen a focused strategy. **Nimbus provides consolidated, networked storage to small- and mid-scale operations (SSO and MSO).** Transitioning from disconnected storage islands to a shared infrastructure is a popular and established method for lowering storage costs, simplifying management, and improving availability. The terms SSO and MSO translate roughly to small- and mid-sized enterprises, though a company's revenues or employee count do not always correlate with the scale and complexity of its IT operation.<sup>1</sup> Even large enterprises can have small IT operations at the edge, such as branch offices.

While many storage vendors sell to SSO and MSO businesses, few focus here. Most concentrate on large-scale IT operations, where the lion's share of IT spending is made. They develop technologies for these customers first and give them the most attention. Later, they leverage some technologies into products for smaller operations, which have different product and purchasing requirements, though it is a secondary priority. Nothing personal – it is just a matter of where the vendors' deepest economic interests lay.

### Nimbus for the Smaller Business

However, Nimbus' grassroots approach allows it to develop products streamlined to meet the particular requirements of SSOs and MSOs:

#### Low Cost

Nimbus' entry storage appliance, the *IPS-500*, costs \$4,995 for 500 GB of raw capacity with two years of support. The larger *IPS-1000*, *IPS-1200*, and *IPS-1600* are all under \$10,000. These prices are within the typical range of affordability for SMOs and MSOs. Additionally, the appliances connect to

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see *The Clipper Group Captain's Log* dated December 14, 2004, entitled *Why "SMB" is a Meaningless Acronym - Trying to Define the "Middle"* and available at <http://www.clipper.com/research/TCG2004096.pdf>.

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Windows and Linux host servers over ubiquitous IP networks using the iSCSI protocol. IP is less costly than a specialized Fibre Channel storage area network (SAN). Network hardware costs less, and administrators do not have to learn a new network protocol. In fact, some enterprises may already have extra networking equipment or ports available to use in an IP SAN.

### ***Ease of Installation and Use***

There is a 10-step process for installing a Nimbus appliance and provisioning volumes to a host server. The company claims it takes only 15 minutes, and it does not require any special training beyond Windows or Linux. The Web-based *SAN Manager* utility is intuitive and straightforward. An optional feature, called *Remote Control*, centrally manages iSCSI initiators on Windows servers. Security is provided through CHAP (server authorization), SSL (administrator authorization), and IPsec (data encryption).

### ***Modular Scalability***

The IPS-1200 and -1600 have a feature called *Virtual Stack* that connects up to five appliances together in a single storage pool. The benefit is that enterprises can purchase appliances over time, as capacity requirements grow. Adding appliances is non-disruptive to running applications. This incremental approach is easier on the budget than a large, upfront purchase.

### ***Sized Appropriately***

500 GB of raw capacity – 375 GB usable with RAID 5 or 250 GB with RAID 1 – is the starting point. This amount of capacity is suitable for many SSOs. Those with larger requirements can opt for the IPS-1000, IPS-1200, or IPS-1600 (the postfix number represents the raw capacity in GB). At the upper end, multiple IPS-1600 units - connected via Virtual Stack - can form a storage pool of 8 TB.

### ***Data Protection and Resilience***

All enterprises must protect their vital information. To that end, Nimbus storage uses RAID 1, 5, 10, and 50 to protect from

drive failures. Fans and power are redundant. It also supports redundant host connections with failover and load balancing.

Synchronous and asynchronous mirroring is available for more advanced data protection. A local synchronous mirror protects from an appliance failure by automatically and without disruption failing over to the alternate. Asynchronous mirroring to a remote site up to 200 km away protects from appliance failure and local and regional disasters.

### ***Standard Technology***

Nimbus uses Gigabit Ethernet network connections and the iSCSI protocol in its storage appliances. These are standard interfaces, which allow for interoperability and flexibility in deploying IT equipment. In other words, they avoid the potential for vendor lock-in associated with proprietary technologies.

### ***Easy Procurement***

Nimbus sells its storage products directly on its Web site<sup>2</sup>. It is not much more difficult than buying a book or CD on the Web.

### **Conclusion**

If your enterprise storage has become too costly and complex, a consolidated, networked storage system is probably the right solution. If your IT operation is in the small-to-medium range in terms of complexity, scale, and performance requirements, then an IP SAN is increasingly a preferred solution – primarily because of its lower cost and ease of use. **Therefore, if an IP SAN is what you want, consider Nimbus. They are focused on you.**



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<sup>2</sup> [www.nimbusdata.com](http://www.nimbusdata.com)

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