



Rainfinity Sings — EMC Buys

Analyst: Michael Fisch

RainStorage for File Virtualization

EMC announced it is acquiring the storage vendor Rainfinity for under \$100 million. **The target of interest is a product called *RainStorage*, which performs network file virtualization.** This appliance connects to a network and moves files and directories between heterogeneous NAS and file servers, even while clients are accessing them. It supports standard global namespace technologies (Windows *DFS* and Unix/Linux *automount*), so that routine changes are transparent to clients.

Much of the focus has been on how RainStorage fits into EMC's virtualization strategy, which aims to mask complexity and unify heterogeneous environments. Like flip sides of a coin, RainStorage complements *Invista*, EMC's existing solution for block virtualization. Together, they can virtualize a whole networked storage infrastructure – block and file, SAN and NAS. The technologies are remarkably similar:

- Both reside in the network and are out-of-band, only stepping into the data path to handle exceptional activities, but otherwise staying out of the way,
- Both move data non-disruptively,
- Both support heterogeneous storage, and
- Both are designed for large scale.

In the future, EMC likely will link them to a common management scheme, creating a virtualization superstructure for large environments.

Well and good, but what are the tactical benefits of the Rainfinity acquisition? What does it offer enterprises today? The fact is that RainStorage is a gem of a product that now has the backing, sales distribution, and credibility of a major vendor. If Rainfinity's status as a small fish in a big pond raised legitimate concerns about its viability as a long-term provider, EMC just took that issue off the table.

Rainfinity does one thing particularly well – it moves files transparently and non-disruptively in a heterogeneous environment. This might sound like a routine or unassuming feature, but it is not. The status quo for data movement is complexity, stress, and disruption. Non-disruption is a tricky technical challenge, especially the way RainStorage does it. Its out-of-band architecture allows it to plug into an existing environment without reconfiguring or creating a point of failure in the data path.

Moreover, file movement underpins many important activities: equipment upgrades, storage consolidation, load balancing for improving performance or capacity utilization, and information lifecycle management (ILM). Speed and non-disruption in these activities brings significant benefits in terms of cost savings (equipment, management time) and data availability.

So here is what EMC's acquisition of Rainfinity means to enterprise customers today: *a good product with less risk.*



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About the Author

Michael Fisch is Director of Storage and Networking for The Clipper Group. He brings over ten years of experience in the computer industry working in marketing, technology analysis, and engineering. Mr. Fisch worked at EMC Corporation as a marketing program manager for service providers and as a market analyst focused on competition. Prior to 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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