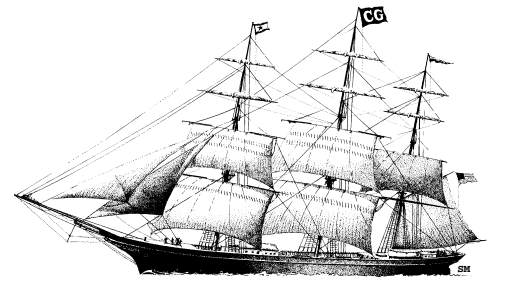


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EMC Cuts Deal with Acxiom — and Crosses the Chasm in Many Dimensions

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Business has always been less about stuff and services than about the information by which we organize, distribute, and monetize the stuff and services. We have been dealing with this information for decades, but with its explosive growth and the decomposition of many business models, it has become harder to get a handle on all of the relevant data, and expose it to all the relevant decision makers. Yet it is access to a more complete range of information that makes for better decisions.

Recent announcement of EMC's partnership agreement with, and intellectual property purchase from Acxiom, a service provider in the business intelligence space, moves several steps to a new completeness of information-centric solutions. It is significant in what it reveals about EMC at present, the roadmap of EMC's information-centric vision, and the distance EMC has come from its hardware-centric past.

The partnership, organizationally speaking, adds some new twists and wrinkles to how EMC partners with others. There is a development agreement that will turn the Acxiom data grid software into a deployable solution, as contrasted with a service provider capability. Coterminous with the development agreement is a marketing pact, during which EMC and Acxiom will jointly market Acxiom's hosted business, and all engagements will be written on EMC paper. Once the Acxiom-EMC solution is launched formally, EMC Professional Services will lead, but the Acxiom Professional Services team will contribute a hefty portion of the expertise needed. This partnership has more prolonged intimacy than has been common in the investment era of short-term expectations, dominated by a revenue-focused mentality. As such, it is noteworthy, but not chasm-worthy.

The crossing of the chasm in many dimensions comes from the nature of the software that EMC has bought, and the way Acxiom's grid architecture and a commitment to distributed computing will recast EMC's array of assets. There is a big difference between embracing tiered storage and embracing data grids. Tiered storage is a cluster-style concept in that it relies on a known collection of elements, and functions by automating hand-offs between different elements. It is a hardware-centric concept, and the integration it affords is rigidly prescribed. Data grid software, like that which Acxiom brings to EMC, is focused on the information relevant to business intelligence, and is managed by metadata, not by location. Access is controlled by authorization, not by anything like hard zoning. It is not a particularly storage-array-centric product - its data grids run on server farms. Its heritage includes a dose of *hive computing*, where companies use the platoons of often-idle corporate PCs to quickly process parallelizable tasks. So, by embracing data grids, EMC takes another step away from its storage hardware roots towards a more pervasive information vision that goes far beyond the hardware that it sells.

The most interesting aspect of this chasm is the landscape revealed beyond it - the kinds of solutions that are possible when you add the Acxiom software to the capabilities EMC has acquired in the last few years. With the Captiva software to ingest information, VMware's virtual machines to contain it (and applications as well, of course), and Rainfinity's transparent data movement to get the *whatever* to *wherever* it is needed, you start to see a vision of a truly *information-centric* system. Add in the information management of Documentum, the data protection of Legato and Dantz, and the SMARTS to model the environment as a whole, and you have a set of utilities to manage the *information system*, leaving traditional storage management to deal with the physical assets and how they are divvied up. EMC's block virtualization of *Invista* adds the link to the physical assets that, while no longer the center of focus, must be considered. Then consider the additional industry-specific capabilities that EMC's partnerships provide. 2006 is going to be a very interesting year!



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