

APTARE Extends Value with Capacity Manager: Releases new version of web-based StorageConsole platform

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Abstract: APTARE, known for its backup reporting software, has added a Capacity Manager product to its StorageConsole platform. This move demonstrates APTARE's ability to scale its Web 2.0 based architecture, providing visibility into primary storage as well as backup. StorageConsole 6.5 provides new levels of information sharing through rich content delivery over a variety of interfaces.

Overview

APTARE was founded in 1993 as a services company and morphed into an enterprise software company over time. One of the benefits of providing professional services and working with customers in their data centers on a regular basis is that you very quickly get an appreciation of their biggest problems. The first issue recognized was how customers struggled to adequately back up their environments. Just getting a simple report to show what was backed up and what failed was a time consuming effort. So, in early 2000, APTARE set out to design a web based software product to solve this problem. The result was the APTARE StorageConsole Backup Manager product. With several hundred customers, OEM deals with HDS and various managed service providers leveraging this software to provide insight into backup environments, APTARE moved on to the next challenge. It turns out that one of the biggest pain points today is providing visibility into the storage environment

ESG research supports APTARE's strategy. When ESG asked what challenges organizations were looking to solve with their SRM software, the top responses were: getting visibility into their storage environments (67%) and having the ability to perform planning (57%). With storage growing at 50-60% per year and utilization rates at shockingly low levels, having a better understanding of the storage environment is the first step to correcting these problems. Once empowered with accurate information, storage administrators can optimize their environments. This in turn will reduce capital expenses, power and cooling requirements and provide far more predictable storage growth costs. ESG research also indicated that the ability to extract the information and share it through easy to understand reports was important. When asked to rank what features they would look for in a SRM tool, 65% of respondents indicated that strong reporting capabilities were "must haves" in a SRM product. As storage grows and requires more and more of the IT budget, visibility becomes increasingly important. Once SRM tools are in place, the justification process gets easier as the people writing the checks understand that you have tried everything to optimize the environment and now the only option is to add additional capacity.

APTARE has designed its StorageConsole platform and Capacity Manager product to help companies get visibility and control over their storage environments. Leveraging a Web 2.0 architecture, information can be easily shared throughout an organization with simple, intuitive graphical dashboards and drill-down reports.

Analysis

APTARE is focused on delivering specific solutions that solve a number of the biggest customer problems. Underpinning its targeted products is a highly scalable platform based on a Web 2.0 architecture that will enable rapid incorporation of new products to solve pressing data center problems. Its features include:

1. **StorageConsole 6.5 is a Web-based rich internet application.** Leveraging Web 2.0 architecture enables StorageConsole to deliver highly collaborative reporting capabilities and a flexible operating environment. As IT is tasked with delivering higher service levels, they need solutions that are flexible and adaptable. APTARE's StorageConsole provides a highly flexible platform to manage data centers in the 21st century. Not reliant on clients installed on desktops, this solution can actually run on an Apple Iphone! How's that

for flexibility? Common characteristics of Web 2.0 applications include information sharing and collaboration, which StorageConsole 6.5 delivers. It allows for role- or group-based community sharing of custom dashboards tailored to a specific environment and ensures that different departments can all work from the same information effectively and consistently. Further, information sharing is not only contained to web browser interfaces, but can be delivered via other web services, pdfs or even rich content contained in e-mail—this isn't just a static image that can be viewed, but actual content that users can interact with just like a browser environment. Reports can also be delivered based upon user-defined schedules.

2. **It is simple to use.** In some cases, SRM solutions require a team of employees to deploy, set up and maintain the application. APTARE's agent-less technology dramatically reduces the amount of work required to install, configure and maintain. Depending on the size of your environment, this application can be set up in hours, not days. The user interface is extremely intuitive and leverages AJAX for simple drag and drop functionality, and minimal, if any, training is required.
3. **Multi-vendor support.** APTARE has already demonstrated its ability to provide heterogeneous support with its Backup Management product. The company has been working with all of the major backup software vendors for years and understands how to navigate these waters. In fact, this release actually extends that support matrix with support for HP Data Protector 5.5, 6.0 and Symantec Backup Exec 11D. APTARE is extending its heterogeneous support philosophy for the Capacity Management product by providing support for HDS and EMC arrays (DMX, Symmetrix & CLARiiON) out of the gate. This support extends beyond SMI-S and leverages vendor APIs to deliver detailed information.
4. **Accurate view of the storage environment.** The Capacity Manager product provides information on the amount of storage actually utilized. This is an important distinction to understand. Some applications provide information pertaining to the arrays only, which results in the percentage allocated versus actual raw capacity. Given that most arrays are allocated as soon as they are installed, this will not provide a complete picture. What is needed is the ability to look down into the array from the host and determine how much of the allocated storage is actually being used. Only then can you get the detailed information you need to make intelligent decisions about future requirements. The ability to track the actual utilization will enable storage administrators to increase storage utilization and more accurately predict when additional capacity will be required. This enables two major benefits. The first is that you can use the information provided by APTARE to dramatically reduce capital and operating costs (fewer arrays=less power & cooling). The second is the justification process to acquire more storage becomes much simpler when your finance and executive teams can pull Web-based reports plotting growth rates versus utilization and easily see that more storage needs to be added.

The Bottom Line

ESG research indicates that companies of all sizes are struggling to gain control of their storage environments. In many cases, they don't even know what they don't know. There is clearly a need for solutions that can provide visibility into complex storage environments. And complexity is relative depending on the resources you have to manage your infrastructure. APTARE's StorageConsole with Capacity Manager is focused on providing visibility into storage capacity inefficiency.

APTARE has enjoyed a very good OEM relationship with HDS for its backup reporting product and we expect that they will leverage that relationship as a go-to-market partner for its capacity management offering. Although HDS already OEM's a framework SRM package with broader functionality, it also carries a much higher price tag. The APTARE offering provides a focused solution at a very different price point that will make it attractive to many end-users.

There are many vendors already in the capacity management space, so competition will be tough. But APTARE's unique Web 2.0 architecture should be a compelling differentiator. Its flexibility and collaborative reporting capabilities are impressive. APTARE's low initial investment (around \$20,000) should remove a barrier to entry for enterprises looking to adopt a solution that provides visibility into their storage environments without breaking the bank.