

IBM Heads into the Deep End of the Pool with Latest Shark

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

Three years after the launch of the original ESS "Shark" enterprise storage product, IBM is rolling out the newest member of the family, the ESS 800 and 800 Turbo option. The system has been upgraded from end to end resulting in a bigger, faster, and more capable box at the same price point. IBM sees the ESS 800 appealing to new customers as well as fitting in neatly with existing customers' growing infrastructure.

The New Improved Shark

With the launch of the ESS 800, IBM has improved just about everything in the Shark product, including fixing some of the limitations of previous family members. IBM believes that by choosing the new ESS, customers win on several fronts, through:

- Industry-leading performance. The new Shark units perform up to 2.5 times faster than the F-model. In essence customers can scale their systems and maintain the performance levels they are used to.
- Quality of Service improvements. The new systems now provide RAID 10 in addition to RAID 5. IBM has also provided new capabilities with its advanced function software, such as remote copy and FlashCopy options.
- Better Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). The new systems allow for larger consolidation within enterprises. The advanced function software is also being competitively priced.
- Technology leadership. IBM has built in FC/FICON (Fiber channel connection) for faster solutions at 2GB/sec, as well as faster disk drives. In addition, the F20 can be upgraded to the 800 class products, so that customers have investment protection for their installed base.

Supporting the Twin Pillars of Business Efficiency and Business Continuance

The ESS 800 was designed to better address customer concerns both by efficient use of resources as well as making sure that data is continuously available to users who need it. To be efficient, products must offer good performance, manageability, and flexibility. For example, IBM has improved backup window features such as the background copy rate, FlashCopy, which provides almost instantaneous internal copies, and through copy-on-write optimization, which reduces system overhead. In addition they have increased configuration performance for faster random reads and writes as well as for sequential workloads. The system also provides increased flexibility and a better overall TCO. From the initial purchase to administration costs, from the overall environment to backup and restore capabilities, IBM claims the new ESS helps reduce overall costs.

For business continuance, IBM has improved technologies and processes that raise system and application availability as well as provide for disaster tolerance, including allowing for backup from multiple locations or from greater distances using features such as Peer-to-Peer Remote Copy. Storage Products also inherit technologies from IBM's Autonomic Computing initiatives, which include self-healing and self-protecting features. These include familiar features such as RAID, but also provide capabilities such as redundant boot disks, subsystem device drivers, or interaction with knowledge-based service applications.

IBM has added capabilities and features that target Shark at the high-end of the enterprise market. With this potential, the new ESS 800 will appeal to several types of buyers. Enterprise customers who are looking to consolidate storage on a large number of servers in a growing environment, or customers who want the highest levels of availability and robustness for their storage environment, are a natural fit for this class of product. In addition, IT managers who want more advanced options for business continuance, or full-function local copy capability, will also find this product has many attractive benefits.