A Storage (Capacity) Optimization Buying Spree!

Don MacVittie, 2010-29-07

Remember when Beanie Babies were free in Happy Meals, and tons of people ran out to buy the Happy Meals but only really wanted the Beanie Babies? Yeah, that's what the storage compression/dedupe market is starting to look like

these days. Lots of big names are out snatching up at-rest de-duplication and compression vendors to get the products onto their sales sheets, we'll have to see if they wanted the real value of such an acquisition – the bright staff that brought these products to fruition – or they're buying for the product and going to give or throw away the meat of the transaction. Yeah, that sentence is so pun laden that I think I'll leave it like that. Except there is no actual meat in a Happy Meal, I'm pretty certain of that.

Today IBM announced that it is formally purchasing Storwize, a file compression tool designed to compress data on NAS devices. That leaves few enough players in the storage optimization space, and only one – Permabit – whose name I readily recognize. Since I wrote the blog about Dell picking up Ocarina, and this is happening while that blog is still being read pretty avidly, I figured I'd weigh in on this one also.

Storwize is a pretty smart purchase for IBM on the surface. The products support NAS at the protocol level – they claim "storage agnostic", but personal experience in the space is that there's no such thing… CIFs and NFS tend to require tweaks from vendor A to vendor B, meaning that to be "agnostic" you have to "write to the device". An interesting conundrum. Regardless, they support CIFS and NFS, are stand-alone appliances that the vendors claim are simple to set up and require little or no downtime, and offer straight-up compression. Again, Storewize and IBM are both claiming zero performance impact, I cannot imagine how that is possible in a compression engine, but that's their claim. The key here is that they work on everyone's NAS devices. If IBM is smart, the products still will work on everyone's devices in a year.

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