

3PAR Adds Sub-Volume Solid State Drive Tiering

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3PAR (NYSE: PAR) has added sub-volume tiering to its automated data storage tiering technology, beating EMC (NYSE: EMC) to the punch by a few months (see Automated SSD Tiering: EMC's FAST Wasn't First).

Automated storage tiering is being promoted by storage vendors as a way to make the most of pricey solid state drives (SSDs), moving less frequently accessed data to lower-cost, higher-capacity SATA drives, for example, or moving critical data to SSDs to meet service-level agreements (SLAs). EMC isn't expected to add sub-LUN tiering to its automated data movement technology until later this year.

Along with the tiering announcement, 3PAR is also offering SSDs for the first time, 50GB STEC (NASDAQ: STEC) MACH8 drives, a much lower-cost alternative to the STEC ZeusIOPS drives offered by EMC.

Craig Nunes, 3PAR's vice president of marketing, said the latest tiering capabilities, called Adaptive Optimization, build on the company's five-year-old Dynamic Optimization technology to work at the sub-LUN level in 3PAR InServ F-Class and T-Class Storage Servers.

In addition to the sub-volume data movement engine, 3PAR touts other features of its InSpire Architecture, including a Mesh-Active cluster that works with wide striping to balance the high performance of SSD resources across all controllers, CPUs, and ports; a caching architecture for tiered storage that has been enhanced for SSDs; and historical reporting capabilities.

Like others in the industry, Nunes sees less of a role for Fibre Channel drives in the future, as the combination of SSDs, SATA drives and automated tiering will meet the needs of the bulk of storage networking customers and save on storage costs over FC drives. Nunes pegged the cost savings at about 30 percent for 3PAR's new tiering technology.

"This kind of spells the end of Fibre Channel deployment in enterprises," said Nunes. "There's a real material shift going on here."

3PAR Adaptive Optimization software is available immediately, while the SSDs will be available next quarter for all InServ F-Class and T-Class arrays running the latest version of 3PAR's InForm Operating System. Adaptive Optimization software starts at \$1,400 and requires 3PAR System Reporter software version 2.7 or newer. Pricing for SSDs starts at \$22,400 for each 8-drive InServ array.