EMC Announces New CLARiiON Architecture and Offerings
By Charles King

EMC introduced the third generation (CX3) of its CLARiiON CX networked storage solutions, including its new CLARiiON UltraScale Architecture and three CX3 Series networked storage systems. According to EMC, these third generation advances will provide midrange storage customers unmatched levels of application performance, scalability, availability, and ease of use, and continue to deliver the backbone for information lifecycle management (ILM). The new systems are also backwards compatible with EMC software, affording notable investment protection, and, in what EMC describes as a first for the midrange/enterprise, are designed to allow customers to easily perform routine service and upgrades themselves, such as replacing disk drives, power supplies, cooling fans and small form-factor pluggable (SFP) optical transceivers.

EMC says the CLARiiON UltraScale architecture (with 45 patents pending) delivers up to twice the processing power, memory, and capacity of earlier systems. With the new architecture users can scale capacity from 365 gigabytes to 239 terabytes in a single system, utilize any combination of 1, 2, and 4 Gbit/sec host connectivity, and simultaneously deploy high-performance FibreChannel drives operating at 4-Gbit/sec and medium performance, high capacity Low-Cost FibreChannel (LC/FC) disk drives operating at 2Gbit/sec in a single system. The CLARiiON UltraScale Architecture features EMC’s Virtual LUN (Logical Unit Number) Technology that enables non-disruptive movement of data within an array, such as relocating an application from 2 Gbit/sec to 4 Gbit/sec FibreChannel drives.

EMC’s new CX3 offerings include:

- **CLARiiON CX3-20** - is designed for mail/messaging, departmental applications and databases, web services, distributed applications, remote replication and workgroup productivity. The CX3-20 can scale from five to 120 drives (up to 59TB).
- **CLARiiON CX3-40** - aims to offer better price/performance than competitors’ largest midrange arrays. The new system supports a range of applications including mail/messaging, heavy databases, transactional workloads, bandwidth applications, video streaming and remote replication. The CX3-40 can scale from five to 240 drives (up to 119TB).
- **CLARiiON CX3-80** - is described by EMC as the industry’s largest and most powerful midrange storage array, and can scale up to 480 drives (239 TB). The CX3-80
offers an ideal environment for tiered storage, backup-to-disk, data warehousing, and large consolidation efforts.

**Note:** The CX300/CX300i remain the lowest price entry point to CX class technology.

The EMC CLARiiON UltraScale CX3-20, CX3-40, CX3-80 models are available now and can be purchased directly through EMC and its worldwide Velocity Channel and distribution network. The systems are also available from Dell and Fujitsu Siemens.

**The Pitch**
EMC aims new CLARiiON call at midrange businesses.

**Mission Accomplished?**
Many or sometimes even most IT solution updates offer little more than new revs on an old motor. EMC’s new CX3 delivers considerably more, leveraging CLARiiON’s traditional advantages and supercharging them via the company’s new UltraScale Architecture into a new engine for high-performance networked storage. While these technological advances make CX3 notable, they also inspire subtler, more profound questions: What part does architecture play in the success of storage, and what type of storage solutions best meet the needs of midrange businesses?

As to the first, the CLARiiON UltraScale architecture allows EMC to deliver networked storage solutions that provide customers a range of remarkable, affordable advantages; massive scalability, massive flexibility, simplified movement and management of information within single systems, and a tightly integrated platform for deploying strategic ILM environments. Considering these features, the CX3’s end-to-end 4 Gbit/sec throughput almost seems a secondary issue (though it is one on which EMC’s competitors have focused a great deal of attention). Practically speaking, while many midrange customers will profit from true, bottleneck-free 4 Gbit/sec FibreChannel technologies, as many or more are likely to benefit from using CX3 solutions to support centrally managed consolidation efforts. The ability to absorb smaller/older arrays or stranded direct-attached storage (DAS) systems, coupled with the CX3’s ease of use/maintainability enhancements, should be a compelling story for increased productivity and efficiency for organizations of any size.

So how does all this illuminate or reflect on the needs of midrange businesses? Figuratively speaking, midrange companies are stuck between an SMB rock and an enterprise hard place. Most have grown up with networked storage and enjoyed the price/performance benefits of these solutions. But ongoing storage growth is just as much a problem for small and midrange organizations as it is for the largest enterprises, as are the inherent difficulties of managing continually sprawling storage infrastructures.

As a result, as much as midrange businesses enjoy elegant technical improvements, they tend to be more concerned about and appreciative of solutions that make it easier to live and work with storage complexity. EMC’s new CX3 offerings fully fit this particular bill in a number of ways, from their basic configurations (aimed at particular applications and performance requirements) to their ability to support strategic information efforts to design factors that make it easy for customers to perform routine service tasks (a nice choice for SMEs looking to have better control of operating
costs). EMC’s new CLARiiON CX3 solutions offer a well-balanced range of capabilities aimed at both the pressing business and technical needs of midrange businesses.

If that is the case, is there anything that could complicate CLARiiON CX3’s path to market success? Perhaps. Over the past 18 months, organizations of every stripe have focused their attention (and budgets) on IT solutions that deliver measurable business benefits instead of technical bells and whistles. From where we stand, CX3’s practical blend of business and technical solutions is one of its prime values. But whenever a vendor makes profound changes to a well-known and well-understood platform, some market education is required among existing and potential customers. Those concerns aside, in CLARiiON CX3 and the UltraScale Architecture, EMC has developed a new set of innovative, affordable offerings that should deliver profound benefits for both customers and the company itself, and set a standard EMC’s competitors may find difficult to match.

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Insightful industry analysis and balanced guidance have never been more important for IT vendors and their partners and customers. Pund-IT’s emphasis is on understanding product and technology evolution and interpreting the effects these changes will have on business customers and the greater IT marketplace.

Contact:
Pund-IT, Inc.
Phone: 510-909-0750
Web: www.pund-it.com
charles@pund-it.com