Taking an integrated approach to data archiving and retrieval

By Kay Benaroch and Troy Lehman

Archiving is essential for growing organizations to comply with regulations and business requirements, but implementing a suitable platform can be tricky. Symantec and Dell offer an integrated approach designed to eliminate the guesswork.

Organizations today are faced with an explosion of data that can outstrip existing data management policies and storage capabilities. Challenges presented by this growth include the need to retain and preserve digital content that is no longer needed for day-to-day business operations but is required for compliance with regulatory, legal, and business rules. To ensure they can support the mission-critical requirements of data management and compliance, many organizations are taking a closer look at their archiving capabilities.

Symantec and Dell have developed an integrated, end-to-end approach to these challenges. The process begins with a Dell Services engagement to identify the organization’s goals and some of their current data management challenges, optimize the storage infrastructure, and establish business-critical policies for data classification and management. The Dell team can then design and size an archiving infrastructure based on Symantec™ Enterprise Vault™ 9.0 integrated content archiving software and the Dell™ DX Object Storage Platform or Dell EqualLogic™ PS Series Internet SCSI (iSCSI) storage area network (SAN) arrays for storage.

The intensifying need for data preservation
Archiving to preserve digital content can be a vital and growing part of running an organization for several key reasons. Almost any organization operates within the context of government and industry regulations. For example, compliance requirements may include storing tax information for a specified amount of time. Many organizations must meet industry-specific requirements, such as confidentiality of patient data in the health care field. Educational institutions must retain student files to comply with government regulations for records retention.

Meeting internal business requirements is also a necessity for many organizations—for instance, organizations may have rules for how long an employee’s employment records must be retained even after that person has left the organization. Many organizations archive intellectual property and business records to provide business intelligence about operations and enable future management insights.

An increasing number of legal actions such as antitrust or patent infringement lawsuits can be a reality, for many organizations today. Each lawsuit can require that the organization provide related documents and records known as electronically stored information (ESI), or incur significant penalties. During this process an organization must make an attempt to provide all relevant documents to their general counsel for e-discovery to satisfy internal or external requests.

Requirements for effective archiving
While preserving data is often important to organizations, implementing effective archiving...
Storage optimization

Storage optimization can be challenging. Today, organizations are deluged with unstructured files such as e-mail, slide presentations, videos, images, blogs, and text documents. Understanding the business context of unstructured data files and assessing the relative importance of those files to the business can be difficult. To further complicate this data deluge, internal departments within an enterprise usually have varying data classification needs they may have built up over time to meet their own requirements.

Archiving should be considered as part of a broader storage strategy. For example, storage managers must understand their data classification needs holistically in consideration of the overall IT strategy of their organizations and functionally for each of their internal customers. Armed with this information, managers can decide how much of the budget to optimally invest in archiving as opposed to primary storage. Archiving should be integrated into the overall information infrastructure and used together with other data storage applications such as backup and deduplication to optimize any investments in software and hardware.

To address these challenges, a good archiving platform should work with a wide range of storage options, fit a variety of existing environments, and easily scale to meet the growing needs of an organization. Tiered storage, including archive tiers, enables organizations to store each type of data based on the relative value of that data as it changes over time, from active data used in daily production to inactive data that is still relevant to the organization. Today, archiving platforms should also be able to manage policies related to retention, deletion, and preservation of unstructured content types such as e-mail, instant messages, and social networking.

Cost-effective hardware, intelligent software, and expert consulting

Symantec and Dell have collaborated to help deliver an approach that meets these requirements. This approach begins with Dell Services as an essential first step. Dell has developed a set of consulting services based on its workshop, assessment, design, and implementation (WADI) model to help organizations develop a holistic, intelligent data management strategy, craft policies for internal customer data sets, and create the appropriate archiving process for the specific business requirements. Dell consultants also help each organization fit archiving into the overall information infrastructure (see Figure 1).

Dell and Symantec also offer a pre-integrated architecture for storage and data archiving platforms consisting of Symantec Enterprise Vault 9.0 and the Dell DX Object Storage Platform or Dell EqualLogic PS Series SANs. Enterprise Vault software provides the mechanism to classify data into relevant categories, enforce retention periods.

**Figure 1.** Integrating archiving into an information infrastructure

for each category, and create an index of archived data. The Dell DX Object Storage Platform provides the ability to identify and retrieve information quickly, manage data automatically, and create audit trails that record how data is accessed.

Object-based and metadata-aware, the Dell DX Object Storage Platform is designed to optimize the management and preservation of unstructured files. A built-in data health processor continually checks and repairs data stores. Additional capabilities include maintaining local replicas, mirroring to a disaster recovery site, and creating secure, immutable storage objects. Built on clusters of storage nodes using four or twelve disks, the platform can scale cost-effectively as business needs dictate.1

Enterprise Vault is an open archiving application deployed by thousands of organizations ranging from large global enterprises to local municipalities. Enterprise Vault 9.0 is designed to manage the retention of data from a wide range of content sources including e-mail systems, file servers, instant messaging, and collaboration systems. The software includes task-specific applications such as Symantec Discovery Accelerator, which provides sophisticated e-discovery searches, case management, legal hold, and chain-of-custody tracking.

Combined benefits of an integrated approach
The combination of Symantec Enterprise Vault 9 software and the Dell DX Object Storage Platform can deliver important benefits. The platform helps reduce the cost of compliance and data management through automated, policy-based retention and deletion. Data no longer required for immediate business operations can be moved out of primary data storage and placed in cost-effective archival storage, enhancing manageability of the overall environment. Manual data clean-up and recovery can be avoided.

Organizations planning an archiving deployment also benefit from Symantec and Dell working together to provide tested reference architectures, software integration, and technical support. As the needs of an organization grow and nodes are added, performance of the integrated platform can scale proportionately—regardless of data type—helping to minimize latency and avoid the cost and complexity of comprehensive, major upgrades (see Figure 2).

Context-based archiving for data management optimization
As unstructured information continues to grow, organizations require enhanced data management that looks at data in context, treating retention and management from a business standpoint. Not all unstructured content is of the same value to the business for long-term retention. Symantec Enterprise Vault 9.0 combined with the Dell DX Object Storage Platform offers a metadata-aware platform for intelligently and automatically archiving data based on business value.

The platform couples Dell expertise in scalable storage with leading-edge Symantec industry information management applications. Dell Services helps organizations develop processes and policies and design a customized approach to archiving. This combination can provide organizations with simplicity of deployment and the confidence that information is stored, protected, and available when needed.

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