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Aperture launches data centre planning tool

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By Manek Dubash, Techworld

Aperture Technologies has launched a data centre management system that measures resource consumption and can forecast future infrastructure needs.

Vista Capacity Management allows data centre managers to gain insight into and predict the consumption of power, cooling, space and other physical resources, according to Aperture's CEO Bill Clifford. "Our USP is the workflow engine where stuff is tracked from start to finish," he said.

Using the tool, businesses can capture their past infrastructure usage, understand future trends based on past use and report on key capacity metrics and thresholds, said the company. Data centre managers can also project forward. This means, for example, that a user will be able to predict that the data centre will run out of space or cooling capacity within two years, and that action - such building a new data centre - needs to be taken.

And by understanding the amount of time remaining on key capacity parameters, the tool provides information for managers to build a business case for how and when new infrastructure should be provisioned.

"The problem for CIOs is that they approach the CFO unprepared to sell a \$100m investment. They don't have the information and the expertise. This is where we come in," said Clifford. "We can help them plan for power and cooling as well as the space issues."

It can also model planned projects that will affect the infrastructure, including the flowing of those projects into equipment provisioning work requests when committed. The software enables managers to maintain a capacity management plan, assign capacity to business units for budgeting purposes, investigate scenarios around infrastructure use, and support new infrastructure build-outs.

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"It's a comprehensive infrastructure management system so everything in the four walls is captured. Vista captures the purchase of a new server when the PO is issued. We know if the SLA has been breached should it not arrive on time," said Clifford. "It interfaces with corporate accounting system. Then when it arrives, the system knows where the server needs to go and what needs to be plugged into it.

"We have a 30,000-unit library of IT hardware", continued Clifford. "We have 20 years of experience doing this -- no-one has this degree of development experience. And most of our developers have been with us for 10-15 years."

"Facilities management and IT management have typically not co-operated on data centre planning to the level needed for today's enterprise," said Clifford. "Historically, capacity management of the data centre only considered floor and rack space, and did not have to cover power and cooling capacities. IT did not need to communicate with Facilities to understand when capacity would be exceeded.

"Today, with high density equipment changing the way data centres are operated, IT and Facilities must cooperate in planning how resources are allocated, ensuring they are aligned with the needs of the business. This requires the tools and capabilities that Aperture is providing."

Aperture claimed that it collaborated with its Fortune 100 customers to develop the application, which it described as the industry's first full-function capacity management tool.

"Our data centres are absolutely essential to the success of our business and so in this area we only work with companies which we know and trust, such as Aperture," said Mark Scott, head of customer data centres at Fujitsu.

"The foundation for managing the data centre is based on the management of capacity: whether its cooling, power, or space. Aperture Capacity Management will allow us to accurately and meticulously plan the growth and lifecycle of our data centres and all of its components while understanding the effects different scenarios have on future capacity. This will prevent downtime, ensure the longevity of our data centres, help us manage projects and save us money."

Richard Villars, vice president for Storage Systems research at IDC said: "Enterprises are facing a period of rapid data centre expansion as they and their customers create and store more rich content and make more copies of their data for decision support and improved application availability. Hard-pressed enterprises will need to maximise their use of current data centre capacity by leveraging best practices and carefully managing data centre infrastructure and architecture to avoid potential outages due to power and cooling capacity issues.

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"While storage capacity expansion in current data centres is inevitable, improving or even maintaining data centre availability will require a keen understanding of future storage trends so that proper planning for data centre capacity growth can ensue."

Aperture Vista Capacity Management is an add-on to Aperture Vista, the market-leading application for planning and managing the data centre physical infrastructure.

As for the similarly-named Windows' Vista, which was on the market first, Clifford explained that the lawyers have determined that there was unlikely to be a nominative conflict between Microsoft's new OS and its technology.