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Aperture brings back capacity planning

Hard numbers to help IT plan for the future

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By Bryan Betts

Data centre managers can now forecast not only their future need for power, space, and cooling, but what effect hardware swaps and changes will have, claimed Aperture Technologies as it added a capacity planning app to its Vista infrastructure management suite.

"Our software manages the physical infrastructure of the data centre - we don't go into the logical side, we are the physical record of every piece of equipment," Aperture chairman and CEO Bill Clifford said.

"Now we can add to the model and do trending - you can run CFD (computational fluid dynamics) on the model too, to optimise equipment placing for the best cooling airflow. It can answer questions such as 'how many months before this data centre's power supply is full?'"

Capacity planning is an old science - in IT terms, at least. Over 20 years ago, DP managers were analysing the trends in their resource usage, mainly so they could predict when they would need to buy more processing power or storage.

The concepts are similar today, but the key factors are instead power, cooling, and rack space - and of course the data centre is far more complicated, Clifford noted.

"The complexity of the IT environment far outstrips traditional means to manage it," he said. "One day, an IT manager is going to put a bladeserver into a rack and take out that whole section of the data centre."

Forecasts available from the new tool, called Aperture Vista Capacity Management, include past trends in power, cooling, and rack space, and the modelling of possible new equipment. "For example, it could show the effects of a complete change from IBM to HP servers, which have a completely different heat model," Clifford said.

He added that as well as the potential to save money by avoiding under- and over-provisioning and managing data centre space better, a key factor for many users will be its ability to produce numerical measurements that can link IT into the overall business plan.

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"The data centre manager has never had tools before that were credible at board level, and was totally ill-equipped to talk to the CFO," he said. "You need more than just gut-feel, you need factual information and dashboards."

He added that Aperture Vista - which is four years old and pre-dates Microsoft's use of the name - can model data centres right down to how much rack height a device takes, how many fibre ports it has, and what type of power supply it needs.

"We have a database of over 30,000 data centre objects to draw on - we have eight staffers working full-time on new equipment, adding it to our library every day," he said.

He acknowledged though that it does not go down to the logical level, so managers will still need other tools to determine which are the best servers to virtualise and consolidate, for example. ®