

Symantec's Broadened Perspective

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Symantec has tried to convince the marketplace that its acquisition of VERITAS forms the right combination for a single IT vendor, explaining its vision as keeping information available and secure. These goals roughly translate to capabilities from VERITAS and "Symantec-classic," respectively.

That sounds good at an abstract level, but many have found it difficult to see just how the combined company accomplishes that better than the mere combination of its products. There is also a perception of Symantec as a desktop-software company, whereas VERITAS has been a corporate storage-software company.

E-mail protection is one area, however, that clearly illustrates Symantec's aim. There's no doubt this example hits home for many. E-mail is the means by which a tremendous amount of business is done today. It's also a major pain point: when e-mail systems are bogged down, compromised, or damaged, the impact to a business is frequently severe.

The new Symantec does, in fact, have a set of complementary products from both former companies to provide multiple levels of e-mail protection. Symantec Mail Security (SMS)—offered as software, an appliance, or a hosted-service—provides anti-virus, anti-spam, and content filtering. It's also an example of a Symantec product that is NOT focused on desktop PCs. VERITAS's complementary NetBackup and Backup Exec provide recoverability for e-mail servers, users, and messages. VERITAS Enterprise Vault (based on previously-acquired KVS technology) provides message archiving, search, and retrieval. And, of course, there are additional VERITAS availability and disaster-recovery products, and Symantec anti-virus products for the base platforms on which e-mail server software runs.

What will be telling is how rapidly, and how well, Symantec integrates products like these going forward. Integrated management GUIs might be a nice start, but they are only a start. Common rules, common policies, and cooperating components would be much better. For example, SMS content filtering components could tag messages for archiving or other handling. This would be save Enterprise Vault from scanning the content again, as is done

today. SMS could also re-scan an e-mail server's repositories whenever an appropriate archiving or content-filtering policy change is made—just like it does today when virus definitions are updated.

Similarly, it will be interesting to see how Symantec re-engineers its internal policies and procedures, especially how it structures its sales incentives and customer approach.

To be successful, "the new Symantec" will need a broad, architectural approach. We've heard several company executives and developers eagerly embracing just such a perspective. While the proof is ever "in the pudding" of delivered capabilities, this is the most encouraging news we've heard thus far for the fulfillment of Symantec's vision, and for its long-term health.



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