IBM Storage Announces new Cyber Vault, FlashSystem and SVC Solutions

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Modern IT is undergoing a massive transformation, including the realms of data storage. Adding more cyber security features and upgrading performance are all proper moves for enterprise storage vendors like IBM, especially for their current customer base. The new additions IBM announced to its storage portfolio should address top of mind issues for many in IT.

IBM Cyber Vault for FlashSystem

IBM Cyber Vault is a new offering that uses IBM FlashSystem Safeguarded Copies to provide validation and verification of copy data so IT can know it's good. Safeguarded copies are logically air-gapped snapshots of FlashSystem primary storage providing immutable, incorruptible data copies that was just released last year.

IBM has a number of offerings in the cyber resilience market including their Cyber Resilience Assessment professional service, QRadar and Guardian software solutions to monitor for data threats from systems and humans. Cyber Vault rounds out their portfolio with validation/verification of data.

Cyber Vault is a blue-printed solution from IBM labs that takes FlashSystem Safeguarded copies and uses them in a secure VM to provide analysis, scanning, test/validation, potentially forensic and diagnostic services for Safeguard data.

FlashSystem Safeguarded copies are first copied to a secure Cyber Vault virtual machine environment. Once there, IT can verify and validate that data with whatever tests seem pertinent. Once done, IT knows whether their primary storage (at the time of Safeguarded copy) is good to use to recover from cyber-attack.

Cyber Vault could be done to at a remote DR site with replicated FlashSystem storage. Also because IBM supports Spectrum Virtualize targets on Azure this whole process could be done on the Microsoft Azure Cloud.

Cyber Vault was already offered on mainframe systems but now this service is available for the open environment using FlashSystem storage Safeguarded copies.

IBM FlashSystem storage upgrades

IBM has also released new FlashSystem 9500 and 7300 storage systems. These include:

- **Faster processors** – 4 Intel Ice Lake 24-core, CPUs for 9500 and 4 Cascade Lake 10-core, CPUs for 7300,
- **New PCIe support** – Gen 4 for 9500 and Gen 3 for 7300
- **Larger capacities** – 4.5PBe (PBe is effective capacity after data reduction) in 4U for 9500 and 2.2PBe in 4U for 7300
- **New Gen3 FlashCore Module (FCM)** – from 4.8TB to 38.4TB in a single module and ~70μsec latency.

All this means lower latency storage access, more storage bandwidth and overall, 25-50% faster storage performance over prior generation storage. The FlashSystem 9500 also offers up to 48 32GFC and is 64GFC ready, with new cards. The new FlashSystems mean up to 2X faster read throughput for AI and in-memory DB workloads, up to 50% more transaction per second for Oracle processing and 4X better performance on VMware Horizon activity.

IBM also updated the SAN Volume Controller (SVC) appliance with two 24-core Intel Ice Lak. CPUs to add more storage virtualization performance to SVC clusters.

Significance

One can see how IBM's announcements incrementally improve and build upon past success, at least for cyber security. And performance is a major competitive arena among all storage vendors, which none can afford to ignore for long. Again, FlashSystem 7300 and 9500 take all this to the next level.

Despite recent quarterly progress, IBM's storage business has struggled over the past few years. FlashSystem and SVC are not the only solutions in IBM's storage business, and all have a role to play in altering business trajectory. And today is just the first of four quarterly announcements for IBM's storage business.

We'd very much like to see how IBM can do more to address some of the other enterprise concerns. For example, the multi-cloud and how to get there. To many, this means Kubernetes, containerization and apps that run anywhere, wherever it makes the most sense, in the cloud, onprem, or on the other side of the world.

Furthermore, on the horizon are all the new AI and applied data solutions moving into the enterprise. How to become the major storage supplier for these new applications needs to be on every storage vendor's mind.

We look forward to Q2 and beyond to see what IBM will announce to raise the playing field on these and the other major issues facing IT today.