



Snapshot

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Mid Market Scale: EMC Centera Four-Node Configuration

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Recent changes in the business and technology environment have made it clear that there is a compelling need for a strategic alignment of backup and archival processes within organizations. It is no longer sufficient to perform complete backups of production data without consideration for cost and operational efficiency. Regulatory, competitive, and physical limitations have narrowed backup/recovery windows, while government compliance and corporate governance have placed new demands on archiving. Although backup, extraction, and archiving remain discrete business processes and technological solutions, there are competitive advantages to be gained by aligning these processes with the value of the business data being stored. Failure to bring an organization's storage policies into alignment with business value will result in the continuing unchecked and costly growth of the production, backup, and archive data environments. While such solutions have been available to larger enterprises, mid-sized organizations found these solutions priced out of reach until now. The new EMC Centera Four-Node Configuration, with 2.2TB of usable storage, delivers the same advanced content and self-management features available in all Centera configurations, but is scaled to fit the needs and pocketbook of mid-sized and smaller organizations.

Sorting Out the Confusing Collage of Terminology

While the terms backup, recovery, and archive are frequently interchanged, each defines a specific business process and technological implementation. In addition, each is an important component of a cost-effective and efficient data storage strategy. Toss extraction in to this mix, and for many this becomes a collage of storage technobabble. To help sort this out, we offer the following brief series of definitions:

- **Backups** are secondary copies of production data that are usually updated on a regular or automated schedule. The goal of backup is the short-term protection of data to protect critical business processes and provide disaster recovery.
- **Recovery** is focused on restoring business operations as quickly as possible. At present, the standard media for backup and recovery are various forms of tape; however, many organizations are no longer willing to invest further in a technology that cannot reach higher service levels.
- **Archiving** is focused on the long-term protection and accessibility of critical information that is important enough to be retained. Archival information may also include "fixed content" that is referenced frequently, but is not expected to change.
- **Extraction** aims to reduce the quantity of information being backed up by reducing the amount of information stored in production environments, i.e., either by deletion or archiving. Successful extraction requires a level of data classification that many organizations have not yet developed.

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EMC Centera Four-Node Configuration: Backup, Restore, and Archive for the Mid Market

While there are some leading-edge organizations that have fully embraced a unified backup and archive strategy, for most, the tools needed to undertake this have simply not been within their reach. This has left most storage managers playing a game of catch-up, hoping to avoid short-term operational restores while seeking to comply with an ever-changing world. Yet, the inefficiencies of past backup and archive solutions cannot be incrementally overcome through further investment in the same: it is no longer sufficient to simply copy production data to tape at the end of each day, and store these tapes offsite as an archive. This is where the new EMC Centera Four-Node Configuration fits into the mid market.

As a combined software and hardware solution, Centera's ATA-based Content Addressable Storage (CAS) approach is a well established solution that offers capabilities heretofore not available in a unified offering. It delivers enhanced speed of access to information compared with tape- or optical-based storage. Centera's use of digital fingerprinting reduces management overhead and results in only a single instance of any given data being stored, which dramatically improves storage efficiency, and assures content authenticity. Centera guarantees data integrity and enforces any application policies intrinsic to storage at the storage layer. Additionally, Centera addresses concerns over long-term management and maintenance through its self-healing and self-managing capabilities that increase ATA disk stability and availability while lowering the TCO.

The EMC Centera Four-Node Configuration, through enhancements in Centera's operating environment software, allows content to be stored on all storage or access nodes. This, along with the new capability to rack-mount the Four-Node Configuration in an EMC cabinet or other industry-standard racks, addresses the needs of mid-sized organizations that are seeking to reduce costs and share space with existing server/storage solutions. With better price and performance than traditional tape- and optical-based offerings, Centera unites the best of many storage technologies into a single, appropriately scaled online archive solution for the mid market. As an archive it aligns the business value of information with the cost of its storage.

Complementing the new mid market configuration, EMC is also offering its Express Solutions for Archiving and Express Solutions for Email, which combine EMC systems, software, and services with the new Centera Four-Node Configuration. In addition, other bundled solutions are being developed by ISVs for this new lower capacity, lower priced Centera configuration.

What Does It All Mean?

EMC's Centera content addresses storage solution offers price and performance benefits over tape- or optical-based storage. Centera uniquely offers enterprises the opportunity to deploy one solution across a range of applications. With the four-node configuration, the intriguing capabilities of Centera are now available to mid-sized and other organizations whose storage needs are under 2.2TB. Plus, with the capability to be rack mounted it addresses the physical constraints that many smaller IT departments face. The four-node configuration delivers all the performance, availability, and complementary software solutions of any other Centera configuration, but in a lower capacity and at a lower price.

For those who are seeking a new unified strategy for their backup, recovery, and archive needs, EMC's Centera offers a compelling archive platform focused on maximizing the relationship of the business value of information and the cost of its storage. The Centera Four-Node Configuration offers a solution for today's mid-tier enterprise while also providing a stable and extensible foundation for meeting tomorrow's needs. Mid-sized organizations with a strategic commitment to storage in their IT operations are well advised to consider the value proposition of EMC's new Centera Four-Node Configuration.