

Data growth has joined death and taxes as one of the only guarantees in life

Infostor January 17, 2006 - Data growth has joined death and taxes as one of the only guarantees in life and, as a result, database-specific archiving tools are growing in popularity. Sometimes referred to as "active archiving," these tools are only offered by a small number of vendors, but can have a big impact on database performance and backup windows.

The premise is simple: End users can realize better database performance and storage cost savings by taking the concept of information lifecycle management (ILM) and applying it to business transactions and application data.

Evaluating vendors

OuterBay Technologies and Princeton Softech are not the only vendors specializing in active archiving software for databases. BridgeHead Technologies and Grid-Tools Ltd. entered the fray last December by announcing a deal that will combine BridgeHead's FileStore storage management technology with Grid-Tools' GT Datastore archiving software to create a database archiving tool.

Some issues to consider when evaluating database archiving tools are the level of integration (or lack thereof) with existing database software, the vendor's commitment to staying on top of the technology road map of a given database vendor and, of course, cost.

Archiving vs. backup

Despite the obvious benefits of simplified database management and storage savings, database archiving is just beginning to garner attention in the IT industry. Some analysts believe the slow adoption of the technology could be due to confusion as to how the tools are different from traditional backup software.

"Database archiving is gaining in popularity, but I think there is confusion in the terminology that has not helped to differentiate active archiving from simple data backup," says Dianne McAdam, a senior analyst and partner with the Data Mobility Group research and consulting firm.



The tendency for IT users to confuse backup with archiving is not rare and it's not limited to database archiving. In fact, a recent survey commissioned by BridgeHead Software showed that while 77% of the users interviewed claim to archive data in some way, 35% of those respondents said their archiving process consisted of manual archiving using backup software. BridgeHead surveyed 165 IT managers from organizations across several industries.

McAdam believes that the number of end users who mistakenly use the terms backup and archiving interchangeably is disconcerting. "It shows there is a danger that many companies have neither the data protection nor the archiving systems in place that they believe they have," she says.

There is a simple way to differentiate between archiving and backup. According to McAdam, all of these technologies fall into three categories: active archiving software slims down databases by relocating inactive data; backup is the storage of data for the purposes of restoring lost or corrupted files; and deep archiving is the long-term storage of files to meet regulatory compliance, legal, or best practice requirements.