

On the Radar: Storage Made Easy provides a solution to siloed and fragmented corporate data

Introducing the concept of File Fabric

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Summary

Catalyst

The cloud has introduced a great deal of flexibility to how organizations can conduct business. The cloud's rise in part is due to how it democratizes IT in the enterprise, allowing lines of business to bypass normal IT controls and process. However, the increase in uncoordinated cloud use has created siloed and fragmented data assets. Storage Made Easy (SME) has designed its File Fabric solution to secure corporate data and make it discoverable within the enterprise.

Key messages

- File Fabric enables organizations to search the contents of all corporate files thanks to Apache Solr integration.
- It allows all file events to be audited and features IP logging and geolocation recording for file location on upload and storage destination.
- It provides a unique cloud control fabric that enterprises can wrap around all of their data, on premise, within a public cloud, or on a third-party software vendor's cloud.
- It provides a way to securely share files via email with expiry or password-protected URL.

Ovum view

Managing corporate data in the cloud is testing the limits of enterprise governance and security procedures. This data is typically stored in silos, and unsanctioned data-sharing tools are used to move it between corporate and personal devices. The challenge for organizations is not to impose draconian rules that would destroy the agility and flexibility of using cloud computing, but rather secure and make discoverable all this data so that it does not represent a threat to the organization. To achieve this balancing act requires a capability to identify all the corporate data, apply policies to that data, and enable its movement to be as frictionless as possible.

Recommendations for enterprises

Why put SME on your radar?

Many IT operations struggle to deliver the required level of availability, reliability, and security of corporate data spread over many different environments. File Fabric enables them to put a wrapper around all corporate data and expose it in a secure way so that users can access it from any device. With General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) due to come in to force in 2018, SME provides the tools for organizations to understand their level of exposure to this new regulation.

Highlights

SME has more than 50 different connectors that enable it to access data stored in a wide range of different repository types, from on-premises to cloud environments. This access is provided through a

single sign-on that is integrated into the corporate LDAP (or other identity management system), enabling policies to be applied across all the data. More importantly, the single sign-on unifies all the data so that it is discoverable. File Fabric is a software appliance and as a result is fast and easy to install in any environment.

Background

SME's headquarters are in the London Borough of Sutton, UK, where founders CEO Jim Liddle and chairman Ian Osborne are based. Osborne and Liddle founded SME in 2009 and spent three years developing and building the initial product prior to releasing it to the market in mid-2013. Today, the company provides applications, support, training, and professional services, enabling customers and partners to build comprehensive data-focused solutions. Liddle has extensive experience in sales, big data, middleware, and cloud technologies as well as a track record of successfully growing sales for high-growth technology companies over the last 15 years.

Current position

SME uses a multilayered approach to deliver its data services to enterprise customers. It starts with the cloud control fabric, then adds a cloud file manager on top of the fabric, before finally adding the user-access layer.

Cloud control fabric

The cloud control fabric is a concept layer that consists of a number of key technologies. The idea behind the control fabric is that it enables organizations to effectively wrap a control layer around all data irrespective of where it is – on-premises or public cloud. SME integrates into the active directory and LDAP so that single sign-on can be used to access data in any location. The data can be encrypted irrespective of the underlying infrastructure. This means that even if the cloud provider does not provide data encryption with SME, the data can still be protected. Using tagging, SME is able to restrict access to data, based on location, device, IP address, or user. This enables sensitive data to be set as available on the corporate LAN in the HQ only, for example. Included in the control fabric is a capability for syncing and sharing files so that data can be used collaboratively in a secure way, respecting access restrictions. Finally, SME uses the concept of file event auditing to ensure compliance to regulatory requirements is reported on.

Cloud file manager

The cloud file manager layer provides a holistic view of all the data regardless of where it is stored. It adds consistency to the data so that users can work with all the data in the same way. For example, it allows the data to be locked at the higher layer so that only one person can edit a document at a time. Other key benefits include the ability to auto-version data and the presence of a recycling folder to recover deleted items. However, the biggest benefit the cloud file manager provides is the ability to search the entire corporate data from a single window thanks to Apache Solr integration.

User-access layer

SME has native clients for all the major operating systems, including Mac, Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, Blackberry, and Windows Phone. In addition, SME adds a drive directly to a user's desktop for Mac, Windows, and Linux so that files can be easily accessed. For those using email to share files, SME has Microsoft Outlook and Mac Mail integration/plug-ins.

Data sheet

Key facts

Table 1: Data sheet: SME

Product name	File Fabric	Product classification	Enterprise file sync and share
Version number	17.05	Release date	2013
Industries covered	All	Geographies covered	All
Relevant company sizes	All	Licensing options	Subscription based
URL	http://storagemadeeasy.com	Routes to market	Mixed
Company headquarters	Sutton, Surrey, UK	Number of employees	32

Source: Ovum

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. Although On the Radar vendors may not be ready for prime time, they bear watching for their potential impact on markets and could be suitable for certain enterprise and public sector IT organizations.

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