

## RainStor puts a different spin on 'big data' with latest release

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**RainStor**, the information preservation software specialist focused on cost-efficient retention for structured data, has released the latest version of its core platform. RainStor 4 is designed to provide a different spin on the evolving 'big data' problem; rather than focusing on crunching vast volumes of data to identify new trends and opportunities, the company highlights the need to retain increasing volumes of structured data to meet an ever-growing number of compliance and governance mandates.

### The 451 take

RainStor has demonstrated solid growth in the six months or so since we last caught up with it. In that time, the company completed transferring its HQ from the UK to San Francisco, changed its name (from ClearPace) and, most crucially in this environment, closed out a \$7.5m series B funding round, bringing in two new investors: Storm Ventures and partner Informatica. The company says customer count will have reached 100 by the end of the June; more than double the number when it closed out 2009. It believes its partner model is already allowing it to scale extremely efficiently; something it expects to increase in the near future as more partners line up on the runway. Its interpretation of 'big data' may offend purists, but it effectively conveys what RainStor is trying to achieve.

RainStor's 80-plus customers to date are concentrated in the telco, financial services and healthcare verticals; crucially, all three are highly regulated industries where the costs of long-term data retention have escalated. **Informatica** – via its **Applimation** database archiving division – accounts for the majority of RainStor's deployments, though the company has six partners in total, among them **On Point Technology**, **Group 2000**, **AdaptiveMobile** and **EMC**. Partners account for all deployments – making RainStor's operation highly scalable, it says – and has driven customers in far-flung regions including India, Nigeria, Dubai and Japan, as well as North America and Europe.

RainStor has homed in on the concept of 'big data' to help articulate its value. Many think of big data as processing, analyzing and searching vast amounts of data – increasingly utilizing distributed and parallel mechanisms such as Hadoop-based map-reduce. Though it recognizes this opportunity, RainStor notes that the flip side to this is cost-effectively retaining these huge structured data volumes in an easily accessible (i.e. online) and immutable form.

The opportunity here is not just for compliance and governance-sensitive organizations (though this is where it is focusing most of its early efforts). For example, it notes that the

recent issues at motor manufacturers highlight the value of keeping historical 'big' data on hand for quickly identifying the root-cause of a problem. In more compliance-oriented environments, RainStor highlights the European Union's Data Retention Directive, which obliges telcos and ISPs to store and make available to law enforcement agencies the original traffic data records of digital communications. These often amount to tens of billions of records per day.

Among other things, RainStor 4 is aimed at offering more comprehensive support for big data within regulated environments. For example, retention rules such as expiry, legal hold, deletion, as well as broader grouping and tagging rules, can be established for specific records; the previous version enabled this only at a less granular block-level. RainStor is also claiming an up to 50% performance improvement in RainStor 4, plus there's new support to run the software on **IBM** AIX and Windows x86-based hardware.

## Competition

Many startups emerge from stealth with a claim that their primary competition is the 'status quo' – in other words, they are predominantly fighting inertia that exists within the IT shop. In RainStor's case, this is actually mostly true. Some competitors do exist – though at this point the only direct rival we have unearthed is **ZettaPoint**, whose DBclassify software is also available through EMC's Select partner program. There are plenty of other database-archiving technologies out there, but RainStor helps optimize these further, rather than competing with them. A case in point is Informatica's database-archiving technology, acquired through its purchase of Applimation. That, in turn, helps Informatica compete with the likes of IBM and **HP**, which both have database-archiving products, as well as smaller players such as **Solix Technologies**.

Additionally, RainStor believes it can use the concept of an organization's internal 'big data' to help tackle the inertia challenge. It notes that production databases continue to get bogged down with data that is not only infrequently accessed, but shouldn't be there in the first place. It claims that a traditional RDBMS is not the optimal repository for machine-generated data such as call data records, logs, SMS data, etc., and hopes that it can position RainStor 4 as an appropriate alternative.

For data sets that do require long-term retention, such as for compliance purposes, the company is likely to come up against traditional data-warehousing players, particularly those with products focused specifically at this niche requirement, including **Teradata**, **Netezza** and **SenSage**.

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