

HP fortifies line of Fibre Channel switching defenses with QLogic

Design win trumps Brocade, Cisco for edge switching

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In the quickly changing distributed data center environment where wholesale server consolidation is rapidly occurring and where storage capacity is out of control, IT administrators need to be able to rely on infrastructure solutions that are scalable and adaptable to change and that save them money, improve reliability and increase their productivity.

The HP SN6000 distributed data center switches

The HP SN6000 line of 8GB Fibre Channel Stackable Switches, offered under an OEM agreement with QLogic, does exactly that. The SN6000 edge switches are scalable and stackable – they don't require extra ports for inter-switch links (ISLs) that other fixed port Fibre Channel switches do, they require fewer cables to manage and their use of 20Gbit ISLs offer future proofing for organizations without reconfiguring topology or performing forklift upgrades.

The HP SN6000 modular edge switches are designed with the needs of changing data centers in mind. Intended for use at the edge of the network with HP servers and storage systems -- HP BladeSystem Virtual Connect, HP StorageWorks Modular Smart Array (MSA) and HP StorageWorks Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA) systems – the switches reduce an organization's cost of ownership by as much as 43% over other non-stackable, single-speed switch alternatives. They also offer 25% more usable user ports because their ISLs are built separately into the switches and don't compromise port count, thereby allowing easier configuration growth and providing better inter-switch bandwidth and manageability.

In today's data center environment -- one of rapidly ramping server virtualization, resource-intensive applications and unpredictable IT infrastructure growth -- the HP SN6000 switches, based on the QLogic 5800V Series stackable switches, offer IT managers an optimum choice to increase the value and impact of current storage investments while preparing for known and unknown competitive business requirements tomorrow. Their 20Gbit ISL stacking capability, which uses the same media and XPAK transceivers as 10Gbit stacking, provides more than 100Gbit additional bandwidth per switch, the equivalent of twelve extra 8Gbit ports. In addition, 20Gb and 10Gb ISLs can be intermixed in the same stack and ports will auto-negotiate to form a single high speed data backbone. Add to that capability adaptive trunking, which automatically pools bandwidth from multiple ISLs into a single high-speed virtual path, is included in the SN6000 switches without extra license fees or the need for manual configuration, and you get the ability to form large, highly available and affordable storage area networks.

The 24-port SN6000 Stackable Switch (20 user ports and 4 ISLs) also features N_Port ID Virtualization (NPIV) support, which allows multiple Fibre Channel initiators to occupy a single physical port, a feature required in virtual environments where many virtual machines exist on a single physical server. And it can scale from as few as 24 ports to more than 120 device ports without hardware, software or application disruption.

What this means for the competitive landscape

We expect QLogic's Fibre Channel switching business with HP to be incremental to the company on a go-forward basis, and enable QLogic to take market share from Brocade and Cisco in this space. Cisco does not have a 8Gb Fibre Channel edge stackable switch at HP and Brocade has been more focused on its flagship director products, leaving QLogic—who has been consistently focused on 8Gb stackable Fibre Channel switches—with an opportunity to make serious inroads over the next few years. It appears that the competition has under-invested in their once-strong Fibre Channel edge switch business, and have been caught off guard by QLogic's rapid progress in this space.

SSG-NOW assessment

This impressive win with the #1 server manufacturer and the #3 storage vendor by revenue signals QLogic's rapid advances in the rapidly evolving \$1 billion Fibre Channel edge switch market. The fact that the #1 server vendor selected QLogic's edge switches for its Converged Infrastructure strategy because of their scalability and adaptability is significant news.

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