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03/08/2011

Conversation topics for EMC World 2011

Since I end up spending much of my time in the lab, you probably won't be surprised to learn that I consider EMC World to be one of the high points of the work year...Setting aside the much-needed (and appreciated) opportunity for social interaction, I find it extremely helpful to speak with end users about new technology and gain insight into how well we are meeting their needs. Based on what I hear, I frequently find myself making changes to my testing methodology or trying a new topology in an effort to better serve the people who keep the lights on.

Over the past 5 years, I've found that some of the best suggestions originate in the "Birds of a Feather" (or BoF) sessions. For those of you who have never attended a BoF session, it's a somewhat structured opportunity for EMC to raise points of discussion and for our customers to provide their thoughts. For example, last year during the "Future of Storage Networking" BoF, I presented the work E-Lab had done with FCoE and FC-SCM. I found the feedback I received on FC-SCM to be especially helpful. In fact, the comments caused me to reconsider some of the work that I was involved with at T11 and push for changes in the FC standard to better support our customers' needs for the long term. The work to address these long term goals is still ongoing and is now being tracked under the name of Target Driven Zoning or "TDZ" (much more will be provided on this topic in a later post).

In preparation for EMC World 2011, we were discussing the "Future of Storage Networking" BoF session, and one of my colleagues suggested asking all of you for your thoughts on the proposed discussion topics. So far, we're thinking about including the following:

1. Realistic topologies and the separation of storage and IP traffic. - We're hearing from many different sources that storage and IP traffic should be separate (at least for now). By April, this discussion may start to heat up as the need for dedicated links for VE_Ports becomes more than just a theoretical discussion. All of this leads me to the question, *what FCoE multi-hop topologies are you interested in?* Is it



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FIP Snooping Bridges at the Top of the Rack (ToR) and FCFs at the End of the Row (EoR) or FCFs in both the ToR and EoR?

2. Active / passive twinax and optical connections - There's been a bit of discussion about this topic and it may be instructive to let our customers voice their opinions on their connectivity preference and pain points.
3. FCoE TechBook - An opportunity for end users to suggest improvements to the TechBook. We've been working on the FCoE TechBook for almost three years now, trying to include concrete examples and case studies, and would like to make sure we are publishing the most useful information possible. Any suggestions to improve the guide, we would really appreciate hearing.
4. Why are you using FCoE vs. iSCSI vs. NAS? What are some of your use cases?
5. Software-based Intel and Broadcom FCoE initiators - What are you expecting relative to your experience with HBAs in terms of set-up, performance, PowerPath, MPIO, OS, etc?
6. FCoE and LAN - We've had a couple of data center customers say they have no interest in FCoE because the LAN in the data center has nowhere near the availability of their SAN, and until it does, they can't see betting their SAN traffic on Ethernet. Is this a common perception?
7. 16 GB FC - EMC is committed to providing 16 GB FC. What are your plans for adoption in the next year / 5 years?
8. TRILL - We're hearing TRILL is probably going to be interoperable at its edges only. Based on how widespread end-to-end from single networking vendors tends to be, will interoperability inside a TRILL cloud influence your buying decision?
9. Target Driven Zoning - Last year I introduced FC-SCM and this year I'd like to introduce TDZ, *a means to facilitate the network's automation of the zoning process for FC and FCoE*, as a topic for discussion. What are your thoughts?

Which of these topics are most important to you?

Are there any other topics that you would like to have to opportunity to provide feedback on?

Thanks for reading!

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