

Dot Hill branches out to channel, IT organizations

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Dot Hill has until now done business privately – they’ve OEMed and private-labeled products to some of the industry’s largest storage players. That is changing as the company has expanded its channel to IT customers and resellers. The company’s mid-range and entry-level storage arrays and JBODs are gaining mindshare in the storage market, primarily in businesses who are sensitive to price and performance.

This is Dot Hill

The name Dot Hill would lead one to believe that the company started with the World Wide Web and dot com surge of the Nineteen Nineties, but that is not the case. Dot Hill was founded earlier than that -- in 1984 -- and since that time has deployed more than 500,000 storage systems worldwide, resulting in a large installed base and large footprint that approaches \$1 billion in market revenue. During that time, Dot Hill also successfully integrated several acquisitions, including mid-range controller maker Chaparral Network Storage, and RAID and network attached storage vendor Ciprico, as part of Dot Hill’s strategy to add value through software.

A public company (NASDAQ: HILL) since 2000, Dot Hill is stable and holds numerous patents related to storage technology. In fact, Dot Hill was recently recognized as one of the top five companies in its peer group for its significant amount of intellectual property by ipCapital Group. Dot Hill’s pillars of innovation include software, platforms, and systems, which combine to create advanced SAN storage and unified virtual storage solutions. Dot Hill’s world-class supply chain allows the company to deliver innovative, high-quality, high-value products quickly and efficiently.

Historically, if you’ve bought entry-level or mid-range storage from HP, Lenovo, NetApp, Penguin Computing or Stratus, you’ve likely used Dot Hill technology already. Each of these companies has private-labeled Dot Hill’s storage systems and resold them as products of their own. You can look at HP’s Modular Smart Array (MSA) or P2000 Series array, and realize the strength of Dot Hill product design.

While still sourcing products to these vendors, Dot Hill entered the channel in 2009. Its products, which have been proven through testing and qualification by the world’s most demanding OEMs are now available to end-user IT, VARs and resellers.

Dot Hill products and technologies

Dot Hill offers entry-level and mid-range storage under the AssuredSAN name. These arrays feature several series, ranging from the newest AssuredSAN 3003 arrays to the entry-level AssuredSAN 2002 Series. Connecting to the network with the latest 4- and 8Gb Fibre Channel, 1- and 10Gb iSCSI or 3- and 6Gb Serial-Attached SCSI (SAS) makes the AssuredSAN a shoo-in for any business that is IT staff challenged and who has a limited budget. In terms of innovation, the AssuredSAN 3000, which was introduced in 2010, is the first

entry-level storage array with 8Gb Fibre Channel and Fibre Channel / iSCSI interfaces. Throughout that year, the company also launched 6Gb SAS, 10Gb iSCSI and four-port 1Gb iSCSI interface options as well.

Each Series of AssuredSAN arrays consists of several models. The AssureSAN 3000 Series is followed by four models in the 3003 family, which are designed for video streaming and post-production activities. The 3003 Series attaches to the network with either SAS or Fibre Channel connections and have as much as 36TB of storage capacity.



The AssuredSAN 3000 Series

The AssuredSAN 2002 Series has two channel-ready models – the 2332 and 2732. The 2332 is an iSCSI-attached storage array with a capacity of 1-36TB without JBOD expansion. The 2732 is Fibre-Channel attached with the same storage capacity. The 3000 storage arrays consist of ten channel-ready models with iSCSI, Fibre Channel and SAS interfaces. They range from 1-36TB in capacity.

Further, the AssuredSAN storage arrays ship with volume copy, snapshot and replication software, all of which make them more attractive to mid-range audiences with limited IT resources who tend to buy storage software integrated into the array.

In the technology forefront, Dot Hill has led with technology advancements such as EcoStor, which eliminates batteries in a RAID cache management system, and SimulCache, a high-speed mirrored cache coherency technology.

The company holds over 80 patents, ranging from recovery of data from arrays of storage devices after certain failures to failover and load balancing to a method for preserving high-availability in SAS-based RAID systems. Research into Dot Hill's patents from the ipCapital Group, found that the company "ranked #4 in portfolio size and #1 in average patent strength among leading storage vendors for patents filed since 2000."

Dot Hill support and reputation

Field studies with Dot Hill's products have demonstrated five nines (99.999%) of availability. This level of availability is achieved through a combination of high reliability, measured by the Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF) of the system, subsystems and software and rapid repair of any failure, measured by Mean Time to Repair (MTTR). A combination of modular design, a high degree of component redundancy, a well-designed alert system and an effective service and support structure all contribute to high availability.

In addition, reliability and high availability are considered throughout the design and manufacturing process. Reduced part count, evaluation of components and suppliers for quality assurance, burn-in of components and subsystems to minimize infant failures and ongoing reliability testing are some of the factors that contribute to Dot Hill's reliability. Dot Hill's products undergo rigorous testing and qualifications in many different environments and with many different applications before shipping.

Dot Hill offers a variety of service and support options worldwide for all of their branded array products, including 5x9 support with next day response and 7x24 support with four-hour response. These advantages are available not only to the vendors that private label Dot Hill's products, but to any customer or partner that buys its products.

Our Take

Dot Hill is an emerging brand in the channel. Recent customer wins include Starz Entertainment, Ohio State University, Rockingham County Government and Computer Dynamics of Japan. Although Dot Hill is by no means a household name, they are well-known among the storage crowd and have built a reputation in the OEM and private label market for building reliable, quality products at reasonable prices. By providing their products through a reseller channel, Dot Hill is able to both build brand awareness and reach market segments, primarily in the SMB space that are not as well served by very large vendors.

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