

December 17, 2001

 **CRN Test Center**

REVIEW: Comdex 2001

PRODUCTS

Nexsan InfiniSAN D2D Backup

PRICE: \$13,500 as tested

AUTHORIZATION REQUIREMENTS: None

DISTRIBUTORS/INTEGRATORS:

MODEL/ORDER #: /

Nexsan Technologies

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With the introduction of its InfiniSAN disk-to-disk (D2D) enterprise storage solution, Nexsan offers an extremely attractive alternative to tape-based backup systems at an equally attractive price.

InfiniSAN uses an array of low-cost ATA hard drives, no different than what would be found in a desktop PC, to keep overhead down. Aptly named ATAboy, Nexsan's rack-mountable, fault-tolerant RAID system offers the quick recovery, hot-swap capabilities and redundancy of disk backup systems at a fraction of the price of either a disk or tape backup system. ATAboy, packaged with D2D back-up software, costs \$8,500.

InfiniSAN storage solutions use realtime agents (RTA) to monitor a computer's file input/output activity and notify the D2D server of these changes. The server keeps a list of changes, and this list

is then referenced to perform backups as scheduled. This replaces the conventional method of building a backup list through file comparison. Not only does this make for a speedy backup process, but because there is a real-time continuous record, it narrows the chances data will be lost between scheduled backup procedures.

The disks within the unit use ATA; however, the interface to the host computer is SCSI. Although ATAboy is backward-compatible with previous SCSI standards, it takes advantage of the 160-MBps transfer rate enabled by the Ultra 160 SCSI standard. The eight-drive array can store up to 560 Gbytes of data.

The RAID system is administered and monitored using Nexsan's Web configuration tool NexScan. ATAboy is platform-independent, and all configuration takes place using a standard Web browser. From there users can manage and view the status of the disks, RAID controllers, the two high-powered fans, power supplies and the onboard NexScan processor.

CRN Test Center engineers had no problem establishing a backup system using the ATAboy. The only tricky part was the fact that the system did not initially pick up a TCP/IP address from a DHCP server. Instead, it was necessary to add its MAC address into the ARP (Address Resolution Protocol) to access the browser-based NexScan management system. Apparently this was anticipated, as the LAN setup procedure was clearly explained in the documentation Nexsan provided. Once inside NexScan, it was possible to enable DHCP on ATAboy so it could pick up TCP/IP addresses in the future.

The NexScan management application made the product a breeze to configure and monitor everything, and it provided straightforward features to help set up advanced notification systems for when there are problems.

The nicest feature of ATAboy is the fact that it provides instant online access to backed-up data. And since it is a disk-based system, access time is markedly quicker. This is because files are not stored sequentially, as they are on tape.

Overall, ATAboy is a superior product at an unbelievable price. Companies that use this D2D system should discover newfound flexibility implementing their backup procedures while maintaining the reliability necessary in any business environment. ,Todd M. Gardella

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