

## QUALITY AWARDS V: ENTERPRISE ARRAYS

# NetApp alone at the top

*After tying with EMC in the last Quality Awards, NetApp prevails this time to nudge out EMC and IBM, which tied for second.*

*By Rich Castagna*



NetApp Inc. continues to shed its “NAS-only” image with another impressive outing in the *Storage* magazine/ SearchStorage.com [Quality Awards for enterprise arrays](#). After a tie with EMC Corp. for the top spot in the last Quality Awards survey for this product category, NetApp is alone in the winner’s circle this time around.

NetApp’s win was by a slim margin—just 0.06 points—and just barely ahead of EMC and IBM Corp., which tied for second with an overall rating of 6.45 compared with NetApp’s 6.51. At the top of the enterprise array heap this time, NetApp’s ratings have surged, especially considering its last-place finish the first time its product lines were included in this category just a few surveys back.

Just like the fourth edition of the Quality Awards for enterprise arrays, the scores for the seven qualifying vendors (of eight included in the survey) were high across the board, with five of seven finalists garnering overall



ratings of 6.00-plus. Rounding out the field after the top three were Hitachi Data Systems (6.28), Hewlett-Packard (HP) Co. (6.20), 3PAR (5.87) and with a 5.78, Sun Microsystems Inc. (now owned by Oracle Corp.). While those are all solid scores, the results are just a bit less impressive than our previous survey, when six of seven vendors finished in the 6.00-plus points realm.

For all vendors/products, the average total score was a very solid 6.22, which was just a bit lower than the 6.39 racked up in the last enterprise arrays survey. But the message is clear: Users are pretty darned satisfied with their enterprise-class storage systems. And that appears to be a distinction the array vendors have earned; the results reported for the first two surveys for this product category (in 2005 and 2006) showed users to be considerably less enthusiastic about these products as they doled out sub-6.00 scores across the board.

### IT STARTS WITH THE SALES FORCE

The working relationship that a vendor's sales team establishes with a data storage manager is, of course, pivotal to whether a sale is made or not. But it can be just as important after the contract is signed, as the ongoing vendor-user relationship is often shaped during the sales process. As one survey respondent, an EMC and IBM user, put it, "I feel storage vendors should also guide their customers on how they can best configure the storage as per applications needs."

IBM led the field for the sales-force competence rating category, with a 6.30 rating that put it in front of NetApp (6.25) and EMC (6.21). IBM's win in this category hinged on its top scores for three key statements. The 6.58 IBM earned for "The vendor's sales support team is knowledgeable" suggests well-versed sales engineers, while they showed off their deal-making chops with a score of 6.37 for "My sales rep is flexible" and a 6.14 for "My sales rep is easy to negotiate with."

## ABOUT THE SURVEY



The *Storage* magazine/SearchStorage.com Quality Awards are designed to identify and recognize products that have proven their quality and reliability in actual use. The results are derived from a survey of qualified readers who assess products in five main categories: sales-force competence, initial product quality, product features, product reliability and technical support. Our methodology incorporates statistically valid polling that eliminates market share as a factor. Indeed, our objective is to identify the most reliable products on the market regardless of vendor name, reputation or size. Products were rated on a scale of 1.00 to 8.00, where 8.00 is the best score.

A total of 252 respondents provided 392 system evaluations.

Although it fell short of IBM's mark for sales-force competence by a mere 0.05 points, NetApp picked up scores of 6.00-plus for all six rating statements in this category; it was rated highest in the group for the statement "My sales rep keeps my interests foremost" (6.13). The tight top-three finish in the category was rounded out by EMC, which showed particular strength on statements related to familiarity with its customers' businesses and industries.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS: INITIAL PRODUCT QUALITY

After making a six- or seven-figure purchase of an enterprise array, getting it up and running and in production quickly and without mishaps is critical for storage managers eager to see a return on their sizable investments. The vendors apparently aren't disappointing their customers, as six of our seven finalists all scored above 6.00 in the initial product quality category; in fact, the average of all scores in the category was an impressive 6.21.

NetApp led the parade of strong scores with a 6.52, followed by IBM (6.46) and HP (6.40).

NetApp's best scores were for ease of use, getting its gear up and running, and the level of professional services required for its products. IBM's good showing in this category was largely due to its 6.68 rating for the statement "I am satisfied with the level of professional services this product requires," but its other scores for initial product quality were all consistently high, too. HP, while not in the top three overall, nonetheless had a very good showing in the initial product quality ratings with scores higher than 6.00 for all statements in the category. HP fared best for the statements "This product was installed without any defects" (6.58) and "This product was easy to get up and running" (6.53).

The highest score (6.75) for any single statement in this category went to EMC for "This product was installed without any defects."

## PRODUCTS IN THE SURVEY

The following products were included in the Quality Awards V Enterprise Arrays survey (the number of ratings responses are in parentheses).

- 3PAR InServ Storage Server S400/S800 (14)
- EMC Symmetrix 3000 Series/8000 Series, DMX/DMX-3/DMX-4, V-Max (92)
- Fujitsu Eternus8000 Series/Eternus DX8400/DX8700\*
- Hewlett-Packard StorageWorks XP Series (70)
- Hitachi Data Systems Lightning 99xx Series or USP/USP V/USP VM Series (46)
- IBM DS8000 Series or XIV Storage System or ESS 800 Series (64)
- NetApp FAS3000/FAS6000 Series or V6000 (81)
- Sun StorageTek 99xx series (20)

*\*Did not receive enough responses to be included in the final results.*



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- IBM DS8000 Series, XIV Storage System or ESS 800 Series
- NetApp FAS3000/FAS6000 Series or V6000
- Sun StorageTek 99xx series

Is it the year of scale-out NAS?

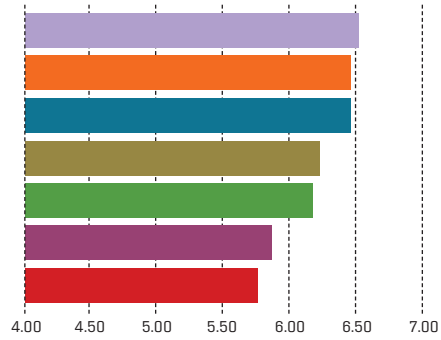
Quality Awards V: Enterprise arrays

Virtualize disaster recovery

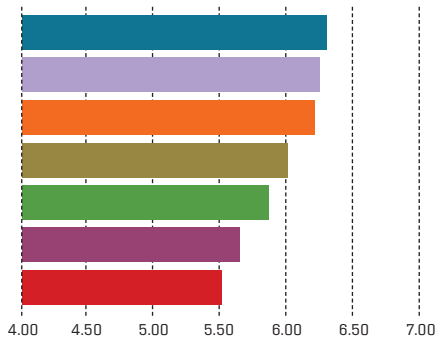
Top new backup app features

Intelligent tiered storage

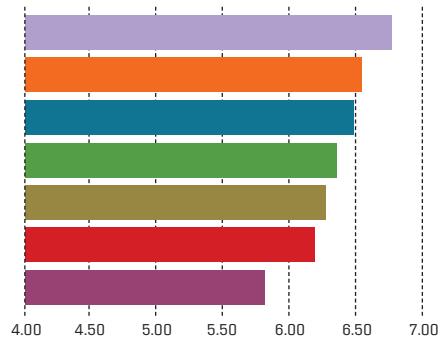
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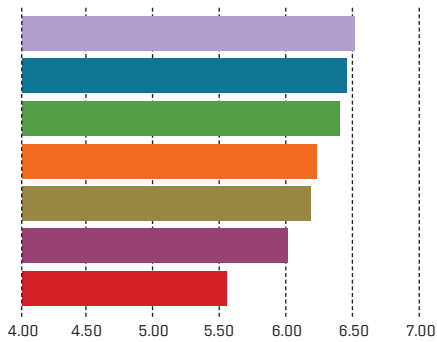
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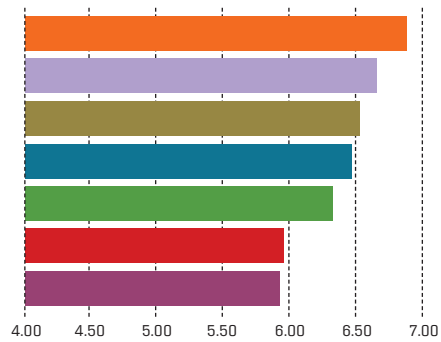
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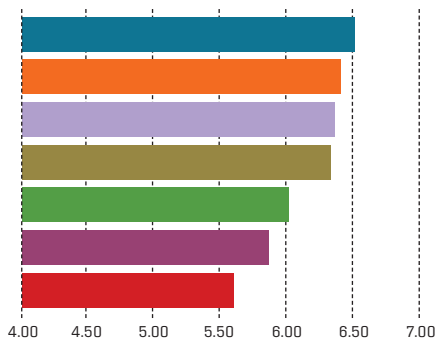
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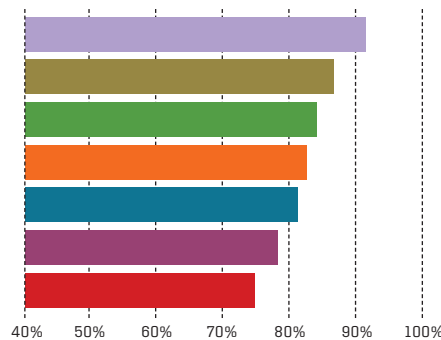
### PRODUCT RELIABILITY



### TECHNICAL SUPPORT



### WOULD YOU BUY THIS PRODUCT AGAIN?



Based on a 1.00-8.00 scoring scale

# ENTERPRISE ARRAYS

## PRODUCT FEATURES

A less-than-pleasant sales experience or rocky initial setup may be forgotten or overlooked if the storage system performs as advertised or even exceeds expectations. While it can be argued that the feature sets of enterprise arrays are often roughly equivalent in vendor-to-vendor comparisons, there's still a great deal of differentiation in how well those features can integrate and work in a given environment. Judging from the results in this category, the vendors appear to be meeting expectations: six of the seven companies received scores of 6.20 or higher, with the seventh, 3PAR, pulling down a very respectable 5.82.

NetApp came out on top of the product features category with a 6.76 rating, highlighted by the highest single score for all statements in the survey, a 7.11 for "This product's snapshot features meet my needs." In fact, NetApp snared the top marks for all but one statement in this category—"This product's capacity scales to meet my needs"—where EMC (6.82) prevailed over NetApp (6.65). EMC's ratings for product features were all quite high, totaling 6.55 for a second-place finish; IBM also fared very well with a 6.49 that placed it third.

General satisfaction with enterprise array feature sets was reflected in the scores for the statement "Overall, this product's features meet my needs," where all product lines received ratings of 6.00 or higher—a score that's likely to warm the hearts of both users and vendors.

## THE LONG RUN: PRODUCT RELIABILITY

Time is the truest test of any product, especially workhorse systems like enterprise storage systems. Reliability is measured on the Quality Awards surveys by how well the systems meet service requirements, how easily and nondisruptively they can be upgraded, and how long they can chug along without major hiccups. "Never been powered off since we got them—which is as it should be!" declared one EMC user responding to the survey. That enthusiastic endorsement was joined by many others to propel EMC to a win in the reliability category with a 6.89, the highest rating we've ever seen

## WHO DOES THE HEAVY LIFTING?

Average installed capacity of the Quality Awards V Enterprise Arrays.

Vendor	TB
EMC Corp.	132
IBM Corp.	120
NetApp Inc.	114
Hitachi Data Systems	112
3PAR	111
Sun Microsystems Inc. (now owned by Oracle Corp.)	98
Hewlett-Packard Co.	75

for enterprise array reliability. EMC flirted with scores of 7.00 for four of the five statements in this rating category and nailed it with a 7.02 for the critical “This product experiences very little down time” statement.

This category again featured solid scores for all vendors, with only two barely racking up ratings below 6.00. NetApp’s 6.66 was good for the second spot, and Hitachi Data Systems posted consistent scores across all statements to come in third with a category rating of 6.53. Hitachi users were succinct in their praise; one simply noted, “99.999% reliability” while another said “They just plain work.”

### **WHEN HELP IS NEEDED: TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Back when we ran our first Quality Awards for enterprise arrays—five surveys ago in 2005—the top score for the technical support rating category was 5.76. Not only wouldn’t that score be a winner in the current survey, it would trail six other products. IBM picked up its second category win with a 6.51 rating as it battled once again with EMC (6.40) and NetApp (6.35).

For IBM, it was the third time in a row that the company had the highest score for technical support. It’s an impressive string of wins and a strong testament to IBM’s support teams and infrastructure. EMC and IBM, along with Hitachi Data Systems, had ratings of 6.00-plus for all of the category’s eight statements. NetApp came close to that level with only one rating barely missing the 6.00 mark—a 5.99 for “The vendor provides adequate training”—and matched its third-place finish from the previous enterprise arrays survey. “NetApp problems have been resolved before we were even aware there was a problem,” said one respondent. “Replacement drives show up before we know there has been a failure.”

### **ENTERPRISE ARRAY ENCORE**

In each survey we also ask respondents, empowered now with the gift of hindsight, if they would make the same storage system purchase again. Often, these “buy again” responses seem to run counter to the category and overall rating results, but this time NetApp capped its overall win with the highest percentage of respondents we’ve seen to date in this product category (91.4%) saying they would opt for NetApp again. Hitachi Data Systems, which came in fourth place overall, apparently has loyal users as well, with 87% saying they would buy its product again.

Taking the last two Quality Awards for enterprise arrays together, it’s clear storage vendors have made great progress on all fronts and that their customers appreciate the results. And considering the commitment those customers have made to land that big iron on their data centers’ floors, it’s sure to account for some peace of mind all around. ☺

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Rich Castagna ([rcastagna@storagemagazine.com](mailto:rcastagna@storagemagazine.com)) is editorial director of the Storage Media Group.