GroupLogic extends mobile sync support with new activEcho product

Analyst: Chris Hazelton Kathleen Reidy

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GroupLogic has released activEcho, which is aimed at the mobile file-sharing and -synchronization market (aka 'Dropbox for the enterprise'). The company intends to sell activEcho directly to IT departments and position it as an alternative to consumer- and SMB-oriented file-sharing and -sync services delivered from the public cloud. ActivEcho is a companion to the mobilEcho product that GroupLogic released in May 2011. MobilEcho enables file sharing and sync for tablets and other mobile devices, while activeEcho brings in support for desktops. Both products help IT gain control of data movement in the age of 'bring your own device' (BYOD). GroupLogic faces a number of potential competitors in this market, although none is yet well established with enterprise IT departments, which are now just beginning to find alternatives to the rampant use of consumer services by employees.

The 451 Take

Controlling the movement of data across devices in the enterprise has always been of paramount importance, but it has become increasingly difficult to deal with in the age of BYOD. As employees demand access to corporate data on any type and number of devices, at any time, mobile file sharing and synchronization becomes a key tool for tracking and managing the movement of a company's key data. GroupLogic is building on its history of supporting Apple devices in the enterprise to deliver its own enterprise-grade synchronization service. With enterprise computing going through significant changes in the types of devices and the manner in which data is stored, GroupLogic is well positioned.

Context

Founded in 1988, GroupLogic has, for many years, focused on file management, file transfer and archiving products for the enterprise, with a focus on connecting Apple products to enterprise back-end systems. The company has 7,000 customers, and is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Historically, the company's strengths have been in the publishing and education verticals, but this is rapidly changing with the use of Macs and the rapid expansion of iOS devices across all verticals. Mobility has also increased the company's reach into the financials vertical. With a change in vertical focus, GroupLogic has transformed itself, as well. The company began its focus on mobility in 2011 when it released mobilEcho to provide hooks into Apple's iPad. Now it is moving to integrate its mobile file-sharing and -synchronization platform into desktop computing.

Products

In May 2011, GroupLogic launched mobilEcho, its first iOS application, which gives iOS devices access to files stored on corporate file servers. Files are encrypted during transport and at rest on iOS devices. IT can effectively manage and control the application, as well as remotely wipe data stored in mobilEcho in the event of a lost or stolen device. MobilEcho can be configured to prevent users from emailing files stored on an iPhone or iPad, opening those files with untrusted applications, and moving files outside of the mobilEcho sandbox. Access to files can be controlled by integration with Microsoft's Active Directory. With mobilEcho 3.5, GroupLogic has beefed up security to fight data leakage. IT can whitelist and blacklist which applications corporate files stored in mobilEcho can be opened with. This provides the ability to sandbox files so they can only be opened in predefined and approved apps, like Quickoffice. The synchronization service also has two-factor authentication using HTTPS reverse-proxy password and certificate authentication. This update also enables two-way synching of files across all of a user's devices, as well as those of teammates. In Q2 of 2012, GroupLogic will launch mobilEcho on Android devices.

Most recently, GroupLogic announced activEcho, which builds on the launch of mobilEcho by providing the same file management to all devices – desktops, laptops, smartphones and tablets. ActivEcho is a combination of a corporate server for file management and free clients for connecting devices. The synchronization service is designed to provide anywhere-anytime access to corporate files from Windows Servers or NAS devices. The client apps make it possible to access files and work with them (annotate, comment and then upload back to servers). ActivEcho also provides a Web portal for users to access with files from any Internet-connected desktop or laptop.

The company's ExtremeZ-IP integrates Apple's laptops and desktops running Mac OS into Microsoft

Windows server environments. It connects Mac OS devices to printers and file servers, in addition to preventing file corruption and incompatibility with files created on Macs and stored on Windows servers.

Partners

While GroupLogic has strong controls for file sharing and synchronization, it does not play in the device management space. Instead, it looks to partners to provide support for the distribution of mobilEcho and the overall management of the mobile device that it is running on. Current device management and security partners include Centrify, Good Technology, MobileIron and Symantec. GroupLogic's mobilEcho has been certified to run in Good's Dynamics secure application environment on mobile devices to leverage its secure storage and remote application management capabilities. GroupLogic's mobilEcho runs within MobileIron's AppConnect framework, which means that IT can distribute mobilEcho across all devices managed by the MDM vendor and, when necessary, remove the app and all the data associated with it.

Competition

GroupLogic is likely to increasingly run up against a number of other players that are focusing on Dropbox-style use cases for the enterprises. We profiled this emerging segment in a recent spotlight that showed the high volume of activity we're currently seeing in this market. Vendors are coming from diverse backgrounds, such as storage, virtualization, content management and security, to tackle mobile file sharing and sync in the enterprise, so GroupLogic will have to work hard to rise above the noise and maintain momentum with enterprises. ActivEcho's focus on premises-based data will most likely see other players taking a similar tack. Oxygen Cloud, ownCloud, Accellion and Egnyte are potential competitors, and we expect VMware will also have an impact here, once Project Octopus becomes a product. There are other providers, as well, although a number of them are sticking to the cloud model. Box, TeamDrive and FileTrek are a few, but with cloud-only service providers, the lines between consumer, SMB and enterprise markets can be blurrier – so the list of potential competitors is much longer.

MobilEcho competes with several offerings from mobile players. These include MDM vendors that are expanding their reach beyond physical management of devices into controlling the movement of applications and corporate data. AirWatch and Fiberlink provide content management capabilities to push documents to users' devices. Wyse Technology, on top of its acquisition of Trellia, offers PocketCloud, which allows users to access content across devices, but does not offer synchronization of data.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

GroupLogic has a large installed base of customers that look to the company to enable Apple hardware to work in the enterprise. It can sell into this base in addition to riding the wave of interest in mobile file-sharing and -synchronization services.

Weaknesses

MobilEcho and activEcho only support iOS devices on the mobile side. The company plans on launching an Android offering soon.

Opportunities

There is significant demand for data synchronization platforms across desktops and mobile devices. ActivEcho provides a ready and manageable offering to meet and control the demands of employees that are using consumer services like Dropbox.

Threats

Due to demand for these services, many large vendors are moving to integrate file-synchronization services into their product lines. Also, Apple itself is moving closer to the enterprise to simplify integration of its products by IT.