Gigatrend offers 4mm DAT storage

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CARLSBAD, Calif. — Gigatrend, Inc., a supplier of storage systems, js shipping what it claims is the first 4mm digital audio tape (DAT) storage system for networks packaged with Novell, Inc. Netware-specific application software.

The primary advantage to users is greatly increased capacity — at a price, said Hinda Chalew, an analyst with Dataquest, Inc. in San Jose, Calif.

The product is targeted at file-by-file backup and restore in a typical Novell environment and can be used for data distribution applications such as transporting large volumes or archiving records. The retail price of a single drive complete with controller and software is $5,950.

DAT is an emerging backup storage technology that involves using helical-scan technology to write data onto media the size of audiocassettes [CW, June 12].

The Gigapack-Lansafe system lets LAN users store and retrieve more than 1G byte of data. This capacity is equivalent to 20 60M-byte ¼-in. cartridges or more than 50 ½-in. reels of tape, the vendor said. Its only competitor is an 8mm DAT storage device from Exabyte in Boulder, Colo., that supports up to 2G bytes, Chalew said. DAT also features greater reliability, "but the technology is not yet in wide use, so this has yet to be proven," she said.

Reliability factor

Gigatrend claimed the advantages of third-generation helical-scan recording make its DAT drives far more reliable than their ¼-in., ⅛-in. and 8mm predecessors. The lower tape speed used in 4mm DAT drives also results in cartridges that are less sensitive to vibration.

A multiple-tape management feature gives users access to tape libraries located on the hard disk, enabling quick file recovery. An unattended backup feature supports backup of all volumes and network servers.

The 5¼-in. form factor has a built-in small computer systems interface and provides random file-access capability providing access to hidden files in an average of 20 sec.