MIS **Market Development**

Schooner charts new course with database high-availability focus

Analyst: Matt Aslett 1 Dec, 2011

Schooner Information Technology has updated its MySQL database distribution with a new name and focus, positioning SchoonerSQL as the solution to MySQL database high-availability and scalability challenges. The company is also partnering with transparent sharding specialist CodeFutures to add write scalability in a future version.

The 451 Take

Schooner Info Tech's progress so far has been far from plain sailing, although it has not really been negotiating choppy waters either. It would probably be fairer to say that the company has been positioning itself in hopes of catching a prevailing tailwind. High availability would appear to be a good bet for the company – we are certainly seeing interest in NewSQL databases, driven by the need for advanced scalability and high-availability capabilities. It is also an increasingly crowded space, however, and Schooner will need to differentiate itself if it is to gather more wind in its sails than its competitors.

Schooner Info Tech has been through a number of minor changes since it emerged from stealth mode in 2009 with database appliances for Oracle's MySQL database and the open source memcached data-caching project. The company shifted to a software-only model in early 2011 as it found that flash drive technology had improved to the extent that it was no longer necessary to tightly integrate to get the desired performance.

The company launched Schooner MySQL Enterprise with InnoDB and Active Cluster, and Schooner Membrain (based on memcached), both of which included the Schooner Operating Environment, providing thread and flash management, synchronous replication, and automated failover. SchoonerSQL, launched at the end of October, is the replacement for Schooner MySQL Enterprise with InnoDB and Active Cluster, and focuses the company's attention on high availability and scalability for MySQL.

While Schooner continues to develop and market the Membrain NoSQL data store, the company is seeing greater demand for advanced scalability and high availability that retains compatibility with structured query language (SQL) – a movement that 451 Research has dubbed 'NewSQL.' Specifically, Schooner is seeing demand from existing SQL database users that have expanded to the point where high-availability and scalability requirements are encouraging

them to look for new approaches. While much of this demand is coming from existing users of Oracle's MySQL (upon which SchoonerSQL is based), the company sees one-third of its potential customers coming from existing Oracle Database, IBM DB2 and Microsoft SQL Server users, as well.

SchoonerSQL continues to be based on the MySQL database and InnoDB storage engine, both licensed from Oracle. It is certified as compatible with existing MySQL applications, and is said to deliver 99.999% availability, thanks to Schooner enhancements, with regards to automatic failover and recovery across local area networks via synchronous replication, and asynchronous replication across wide area networks for disaster recovery. Write scalability is due to be added later via a partnership with CodeFutures that will see its dbShards transparent sharding and replication capabilities embedded in SchoonerSQL.

Schooner Info Tech now has 25 customers – it claimed 20 in January – but is hoping to ramp that figure based on the launch of SchoonerSQL and a new partnership deal with Insigma Hengtian Software in China, which recently signed up to resell and support both SchoonerSQL and Membrain. It has about 50 employees, including Hengtian Software contractors.

Competition

Previously, Schooner would have differentiated itself from other MySQL distributions and complementary technologies from Oracle, as well as Monty Program, Percona, and SkySQL, via its focus on flash memory optimization. While that underlying capability remains, the focus has now shifted to high availability, and the most obvious competition for SchoonerSQL comes from users attempting to scale their existing MySQL database deployments using clustering and replication technology such as Continuent's Tungsten or Codership's Galera.

Additionally, Oracle recently announced that it is developing new replication capabilities included in the developer milestone release of MySQL 5.6. Schooner also considers MySQL Cluster, which is based on a separate codebase from MySQL and designed for high write scalability and real-time performance with support for transparent auto-sharding and integrated clustering and failover, as a long-term direct competitor.

Other key NewSQL providers to have emerged in recent months include ScaleBase, which offers a Database Load Balancer software layer that automatically manages database sharding; database-clustering and load-balancing specialist ScalArc; and database-clustering appliance provider Clustrix. Other NewSQL providers include Xeround, which offers a cloud database offering based on MySQL, as well as VoltDB and NuoDB.

There is no shortage of competition in the NoSQL space, including Apache Cassandra, supported by DataStax, Basho Technologies' Riak, 10gen's MongoDB, Couchbase's Couchbase Server, and Apache HBase and Hypertable Inc. While Schooner continues to offer Membrain for users specifically looking for a persistent data store that supports the memcached API, the company now believes that bringing improved scalability to SQL databases will largely overshadow interest in NoSQL.

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