Seagate Jumps Into PCIe SSD Market

OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS
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Shipments to Start Immediately

Seagate Technology announced on January 28, 2013 that the company will immediately begin to ship PCI Express (PCIe) SSDs through an arrangement with start-up Virident Technology. In this arrangement Seagate is investing $40 million in the company and will place a Seagate employee on Virident's board. Furthermore, the two companies will jointly develop next-generation hardware and software.

Seagate Gains Fast Time to Market

For a moderate sum this gives Seagate very rapid access to a market that is growing quickly and has attracted a lot of attention from many other SSD suppliers. The normal slow development cycle has been bypassed with Seagate immediately starting shipments of a product that will be well received.

Seagate has received some bad press over the past few years over its slow movement into the SSD market, especially since the company is highly dependent upon enterprise HDD sales which are threatened by SSDs. In reality Seagate strives to maintain its reputation for consistent quality by not releasing products until they have been exhaustively tested and found to meet its exacting standards, and this takes time. The company has probably spent over a year qualifying the Virident product to assure that customers will not discover any problems that could tarnish Seagate's good name.

Who is Virident?

Virident Technology is a six-year-old start-up that produces high-performance PCIe SSDs. This was not its first business - initially Virident tried to market hardware appliances that accelerated the performance of MySQL and memcached, two software packages that could benefit through the use of dedicated hardware.

Virident's appliances used a type of NOR flash that was being promoted at the time by Spansion. According to Virident, NOR is significantly slower to program than NAND, and this forced the company to develop algorithms that excel in providing consistently fast writes. Most SSDs are fast a very high percentage of the time, but suffer slowdowns of a few orders of magnitude from