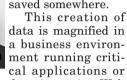# How Businesses Conquer Mountains Of Data

by Roland Hagan

(NAPSA)—Every time people send e-mail, create documents or Web pages, save digital photographs, or even visit the doctor and have medical details recorded into a computing system, they are creating digital data that needs to be saved somewhere.

Hagan

This creation of data is magnified in a business environment running critical applications or data-intensive Web sites. In fact, analyst firms estimate that data volumes are increasing by 250 megabytes per person per year—that's equivalent to 50 copies of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.

Businesses of all sizes are grappling with this data deluge, which, according to analysts, will claim as much as 80 percent of most organizations IT budgets by 2003. It is small-to-medium-sized businesses (SMBs), however, that face the biggest challenge. These organizations generally don't have the staff, budgets or time to manage the growth of data. As a result, they use a stopgap approach to storage, plugging in storage boxes randomly to solve problems as they arise—which leads to underutilization of available storage space and significantly higher costs.

The consequences of poorly managed data can be the difference between a profitable venture and an unsuccessful one. Organizations without a plan for regularly backing up data run the risk of going out of business all together. Now IBM has a renewed initiative focused on developing storage solutions to help small- and medium-size customers overcome these challenges. It is working to create storage systems that manage, heal and protect themselves, reducing the time and money spent on managing data.

Industries most affected by the data explosion include:

• Media and entertainment, comprised largely of small and medium companies and production houses, which must digitally store and archive film, video and audio content.

• Health and medical companies. Every person who seeks medical treatment has records that need to be stored and shared.

• Research companies, part of the life sciences market. It is estimated that the volume of life sciences data is doubling every six months, faster than any other industry. The world's 20 genomic centers alone produce more than seven petabytes (that's seven million gigabytes) of information that needs to be stored and shared.

There are few easy solutions for users who need interoperability among their software, routers, switches and storage devices, and don't want to incur the time or cost of extensive testing. Perhaps this explains the success of pre-tested solutions, which offers storage configurations from multiple vendors that have been pre-tested to work together. The benefit to customers: easy-to-deploy solutions that allow them to get their networks up and running quickly.

One day, computer systems will be able to heal themselves, improve their own performance, adapt to changes on their own and protect themselves from intrusion. That's IBM's vision of autonomic computing. Equipped with self-management features designed to monitor the health of IT systems and prevent potential problems before they occur, autonomic devices will ease the burden of storage administration for small and medium businesses.

Roland Hagan is vice president of midmarket and midrange marketing, IBM Storage Systems Group.