

New IBM zSeries Provides Big Power in a Little Package

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The new IBM eServer z800 OE1 provides mainframe customers with greater flexibility and choice, by providing a model with a small MIPS engine for traditional workloads, as well as the ability to port or develop new workloads for Linux on the same system.

Everyone Loves the Mainframe

The current trend du jour is the mainframe. More accurately, it is the mainframe environment that IT managers seek to emulate for other architectures. This has led to interesting marketing campaigns as computer companies offer greater availability capabilities and richer security and management features to customers. This has also led to a renewal of interest in actual mainframes. However, the challenge for mainframe computing has been a combination of the relatively high cost of mainframe software when compared to alternative architectures and the lack of suitable applications for Web and real-time transaction processing environments.

The IBM zSeries group, owners of the mainframe architecture, has tackled these challenges with the z800, a scaled-down mainframe that offers all of the advantages of the mainframe for smaller workloads. Mainframe software costs are based on the number of MIPS in the system. Offering a smaller system with fewer MIPS translates into a more affordable system. The z800 also runs the Linux OS. This allows IT managers access to a mainframe environment with applications developed for the Linux environment and all the applications that continue to be ported to Linux. The latest announcement is the z800 OE1, which will make mainframe and Linux-on-a-mainframe more affordable for even more customers.

Good Things Come in Small Packages

The z800 OE1 is the new baby of the zSeries family. It provides the 64-bit architecture with a smaller 40 MIPS engine, which is half the size of the OA1, the current entry-level product. It also comes with an integrated facility for Linux (IFL) that allows managers to run Linux applications on the system in addition to mainframe applications. IBM believes the system will provide up to 50% of the performance of the OA1, and the system is upgradeable to the rest of the zSeries family as user needs grow. An additional interesting feature of this system is that current OA1 customers can downgrade their system to a OE1 if that combination is more sensible for them. It is possible to run the z/VM software on the system as well, which allows for system partitioning — useful for server consolidation among other applications. The system prices comparably to a OA1 but is the only standard model that comes configured with an IFL.

Taking Advantage of the Deal

The new z800 OE1 should come as a boon for current customers, as it offers greater investment protection in the mainframe architecture. For customers running smaller workloads on older G2-G4 systems, this model offers a cost-effective opportunity to upgrade. It also grants them the ability to work with the latest Linux technology without having to invest in one more architecture. The new z architecture is modular in structure, so the upgrade and downgrade path from the OE1 to the OA1 and scaling on to high end of the z900 is possible — offering further investment protection and growth opportunities. This announcement continues to demonstrate IBM's commitment to the mainframe architecture, to the Linux environment, and to IBM's ongoing vision of allowing customers to find the appropriate environment for their application regardless of workload size or preferred architecture.