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IBM Puts On Demand Spotlight on the Mainframe with an Updated Charter

By Joyce Tompsett Becknell

Last year, IBM announced the Mainframe Charter, its commitment to investment in the platform and its customers. Now IBM is revealing its latest achievements to help customers and show them what they have to look forward to in the near future.

Continuing Commitment to Heritage

In August 2003, IBM first announced the Mainframe Charter as a framework for future investment in the platform. In the midst of seismic changes in how IT is valued and used, IBM realized it was crucial to demonstrate to customers that the mainframe would remain a core piece of IBM on demand strategy and show how IBM would continue to add value. It was an acknowledgement of the ongoing strengths of the platform, as well as a response to specific customer concerns about the role of the mainframe in a post-Cobol world. The original announcement focused on pricing initiatives designed to bring system costs in line, as well as promises to drive technology leadership for integrated businesses. IBM also committed to creating programs to help ISVs and IT managers develop the necessary mainframe skills. Now IBM is announcing the next set of initiatives and investments that position the mainframe for the data center of at least the next twenty years.

Innovation, Value, and Community

This time, IBM is focusing on customer requirements for resilience, security, integration, and system intelligence in making on demand a reality. IBM focuses in three areas: innovation, where they focus on technology; value, which addresses business requirements; and community, or helping the network of ISVs, partners, and customers take advantage of what innovation and value provide.

Innovation for Dynamic Businesses

To demonstrate innovation, IBM is revealing its technology roadmaps for various aspects of the system, including virtualization, business resiliency, security, business integration, and intelligent workload management. More importantly, IBM is also actively demonstrating how software products such as DB2, Websphere, and Tivoli are being leveraged for the platform, as well as the tools and capabilities acquired through the company's recent Candle and Cyanea acquisitions. In addition IBM is focused on several specific technologies. These include:

- GDPS Hyperswap Manager for single-site recovery. This product is a lower-cost approach to improving management of disk subsystems. Scheduled for release in the first quarter of 2005, it makes advanced storage management affordable to more customers.

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▫ Support for zAAP with z/OS 1.6. The zSeries Application Assist Processor is designed to offload the majority of Java work from the main processor for performance and software cost benefits. IBM now provides for integration of WebSphere and Java-based workloads with core applications and data.

▫ Communication Controller for Linux. This product, which IBM intends to deliver in the first half of 2005, is intended to simplify integration of SNA networks with a Linux image. It should replace the 3745 and 3746 Communications Controllers that customers must currently use.

At a data center level, IBM is planning zSeries support for its Virtualization Engine. This will begin with the Enterprise Workload Manager for z/OS, which IBM says will be delivered in the fourth quarter of 2004. For customers struggling with application management, this is a step toward enabling end-to-end monitoring and management of applications across IBM platforms.

As it contemplates the targeted needs of various verticals, IBM provides the zTransaction Processing Facility Enterprise Edition v1.1.0, which is the operating system for high-availability transaction processing. IBM maintains the system can process tens of thousands of transactions per second, an attractive proposition for customers in the travel, banking, finance, and public-sector markets. These developments will enable customers to deploy new workloads in the zSeries environment with increasing ease and confidence.

Value for Vertical Markets and Dynamic Business

IBM has developed business integration workshops to help companies with tailored blueprints for how to automate business processes with Services Based architectures. Customers can integrated, extend, and transform applications for on demand requirements. More specifically, IBM now has reference architectures for financial services, and plans for architectures for government and insurance in 2005.

IBM has opened the Banking Operating Environment for On Demand Business in its Montpellier, France location. The showcase is a functional back-office banking environment. The showcase focuses on banking's concerns with regulatory changes, security, and handling planned and unplanned outages as well as looking at banking of the future that looks at prototypes of new services.

Global Community Development

Increase reliance on the mainframe translates to greater need for mainframe-trained IT staff. To that end, IBM has announced it is working with universities worldwide with a stated goal of 20,000 new mainframe-trained workers by 2010. Additionally the company is working with ISVs to broaden application availability for both z/OS and Linux on the mainframe.

As China continues to lead emerging market opportunities, IBM has also focused investment in the region. Activities include opening a new laboratory in China focusing on industries such as government and financial services, providing zSeries equipment to Chinese universities, and assisting with course development as well as increasing IBM staff in China.

Investment Protection for the Future

Customers who are used to relying on IBM in their data centers should find many important announcements within IBM's updated Charter. The challenge for IBM and its users will be to absorb the plans and the numerous implications they will have for any single user environment. At a minimum, customers who have contemplated the mainframe as the server of choice for on demand workloads will find that IBM understands the implications on software and tools, beyond the technical needs of making the OS and applications function together, and that the company is focused on making its products integrate. Customers in banking will find that IBM has turned its focus on their specific needs and have an opportunity to explore solutions for various different business needs. Finally, customers with business opportunities in the Chinese market will find that IBM is strengthening and developing its community in the region.

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