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New IBM i890 Drives eServer Family Forward

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The new IBM i890 brings together the performance and scalability of the Power4 family used in the UNIX and mainframe lines as well as the manageability features of eLiza to create the most powerful member of the iSeries yet. More important than bringing new features to the series, with the new i890 IBM is laying the architectural foundations for the future of the eServer family.

The iSeries family has always been known for being reliable, secure, easy to manage, and good for rapid deployment of applications. The i890 maintains all of these advantages, but adds scalability, availability, and compatibility features to the mix. Some of the features come from the Power4 architecture that IBM introduced on the pSeries last year. Other features are added in OS/400 V5R2 as a direct result of IBM's eLiza initiative. The eLiza initiative is all about creating self-managing servers and is one of the programs developing technologies in line with IBM's vision of autonomic computing.

The New Stuff

From a scalability viewpoint, the announcement contains several interesting items. The new features give IT managers the ability to scale workloads, within the system through workload management and dynamic partitioning as well as by adding additional components such as drives and processors for traditional scaling. The new i890 is larger than previous models. It scales to thirty-two processors, and has double the memory and I/O capacity of the i840. It is the largest iSeries to date.

The announcement introduces new features not just for the i890 but also for the entire i8xx line of the family. For scalability, this means that capacity upgrade on demand is now available for all standard models of the i830, i840, and i890. Standby processors can be added without bringing the system down.

Finally, the i890 takes advantage of the partitioning capabilities that were introduced in V5R1, providing up to thirty-two dynamic partitions of the system. New for this release is the ability to create Linux partitions within the system, as well as the ability to partition Websphere products.

Availability is another important concern for IT managers, and the announcement highlights several new takes on this as well. Switched disk for high availability and clustering allows a manager to shift not just file systems but databases to another server transparently. The workloads are shifted to another server without any interruption to the applications. This is increasingly important to managers who cannot afford to have planned downtime for mission-critical applications. Another important feature is enterprise identity mapping, which allows for single sign-on across the enterprise and simplifies administration of applications running across multiple servers. Finally, there are now security wizards that provide self-protection and self-optimization of the server.

The third important announcement category is compatibility features. Arguably, this is the most important of the three areas, as it clearly demonstrates that the iSeries is not a proprietary box running proprietary applications. The iSeries, like the rest of IBM's server products, has demonstrated compatibility with Linux by supporting Linux partitions. As a proof point of the iSeries' compatibility, Symantec has recently announced a version of their Linux Firewall product that will run on the iSeries. The iSeries team continues to enhance support for SQL standards and UDB for the product as well. IBM has added additional Windows Server management features, including updated Microsoft cluster service and support for the latest xSeries servers.

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Finally, IBM has also announced that users will be able to run AIX on the iSeries. The iSeries is committed to compatibility across IBM's eServer product line.

Looking to the Future

The legion of iSeries fans is ardent and loyal. They are a group that generally values enterprise application integration above other technical features. However, as these users have moved to ebusiness applications, they have taken their servers with them and found that they have adapted very well. IBM has taken the concept of a packaged end-to-end solution, with simplicity of use, and married that to the scalability and availability features we've come to expect from high-end UNIX or mainframe servers. In addition, they've provided compatibility with an increasing number of industry standard technologies. The result is an eServer that sits at the heart of the data center providing the best of IBM technology while keeping in mind customer business needs. IT managers who have not previously considered the iSeries for their environment and who need reliable, secure, scalable applications and would rather run their business than babysit their data center should take a look at this new iSeries server.

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