



Snapshot

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IBM eServer xSeries 206 and 306: IT Building Blocks for SMBs

By AJ Dennis

IT architectures reflect the same issues of complexity and confidence as do the companies that deploy them. Responding effectively to today's business challenges and opportunities requires flexibility in the IT infrastructure upon which they are built. A company's product may be medical services, travel, insurance, or even specialty steel, but the business of that company demands skills in information management, communications, and government regulation. The ability to respond to rapid marketplace changes is a universal business necessity, regardless of whether said business is a small, medium, or even large enterprise. As a result, the goal for vendors and their customers is to simplify computing complexity and raise business confidence through manageable, autonomic business computing infrastructures that respond to changing business demands. IBM's continued commitment to the SMB market is manifest through a range of solutions, from the recently introduced eServer xSeries x206 and x306 servers to the expanding options afforded by the company's Express Portfolio initiative.

Providing Value to the Entry Level Market

IBM is expanding its SMB portfolio with offerings such as its new entry-level eServer xSeries x206 (tower) and x306 (rack mount) models. These solutions benefit from IBM's wide experience in and understanding of enterprise market segments and demonstrate how that knowledge can benefit SMBs. The x206 and x306 offer cost-effective deployment and ongoing maintenance, along with the notable flexibility of operating systems, applications, and support services built upon an Intel-based platform. In addition, these latest offerings anticipate future growth while delivering high performance, speed, and scalability for critical business applications.

The x206 and x306 are based on the IBM Enterprise X-Architecture and chipset technology, and feature IBM mainframe-inspired technologies such as Active Memory Mirroring, Memory ProteXion, Predictive Failure Analysis, diagnostic LEDs, and advanced management options. Both models utilize the high-performance 3.0 GHz Intel Pentium 4T Processors with 800MHz front-side bus speed and up to 1MB of L2 cache. In addition, the x206 and x306 now also offer upgrades to Intel's new Xeon EM64T processors (which deliver 64-bit extensions support) and elements of IBM's new *Xtended Design Architecture (XDA)* which incorporate high-value features such as enhanced memory expansion, faster I/O, integrated RAID, redundant & hot swap disks and power supplies, and new methods of cooling. The x206 and x306 both provide direct front access to the "screwdriver-free" simple-swap SATA hard disk drives that provide integrated IBM ServeRAID 7e support as a standard feature. ServeRAID 7e supports RAID 0 and 1, and is easy to set up and manage with IBM's xSeries ServeRAID Manager software. The x206 also supports optional SATA or SCSI RAID solutions for customers needing even higher levels of data performance and protection. The x306 is designed for edge-of-network applications, where physical space is always at a premium, as noted by its small 1U rack-optimized footprint and 20" deep mechanical design. The x206 tower is optimized for small businesses through value-added features such as secure remote power-on and off through ASF2.0 — a notable plus for distributed environments.

SMBs in the Express Lane

IBM's *Express* initiative identifies a range of IT platforms, products, services, and solutions for small and medium businesses, with the goal of delivering highly efficient and effective technology through a streamlined, customer-

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friendly acquisition and ownership experience. IBM *Express* is a componentized business IT architecture that provides a flexible IT model where proprietary and open components (hardware and software) coexist to the benefit of vendors, partners, and customers. Through this common ground, IBM is able to drive competitive pricing, while delivering serviceable architectures and more widely supportable IT implementations.

The *Express* software line (with more than fifty offerings currently available) demonstrates IBM's commitment to high functionality in an integrated package that can be quickly implemented to deliver on the strategic concept of software as infrastructure, where rich middleware offerings and related services connect and support various OS and application components throughout the business ecosystem. IBM's software infrastructure provides a platform featuring horizontal middleware functionality including Web application commerce and portal servers; business integration and data queuing services through WebSphere; database and information management services with DB2; and email, messaging, and collaborations services through its Lotus offerings. This software infrastructure supports vertical solution components from IBM and more than 200 ISVs in IBM's Advantage Partner Program, as well as more than 1,500 partners committed to *Express* enablement.

As part of the *Express* portfolio, IBM's eServer (xSeries, pSeries, and iSeries), TotalStorage, and ThinkPad components offer a range of enabling technology, from x86 solutions to powerful UNIX servers, that deliver the IT infrastructure required for business computing. The new eServer x206 and x306 specifically represent attractively priced entry points to IBM's rich ecosystem of IT business solutions for any SMB.

Addressing Customer Standards through Industry Standards

The x86 processor and other industry-standard elements of storage, networking, and I/O are critical ingredients for driving the growth and success of SMB business computing, and provide significant advantages in the small but critical touches a vendor makes to the standards-enabled server recipe. For IBM in particular, the company's engineering focus on performance, balanced with value awareness, is a plus SMB customers are sure to appreciate. An even greater differentiation for IBM is the company's overall commitment to and strategic focus on the SMB market segment. This is in sharp contrast to other vendors' strategies. HP's approach to SMBs in the x86 space in general, and particularly in entry-level servers, features well-engineered products but lacks the overall depth of strategic SMB solutions that IBM delivers. Dell is all about price, with products built to margin specs rather than performance specs. This tactical approach is increasingly dated as acquisition costs are a decreasing part of successful SMB deployments. Additionally, Dell lacks the range of credible services and support for which IBM is justly renowned.

What Does It All Mean?

From the most basic IT needs of file and print sharing, to the ebusiness functionality of Web servers and services such as email, portals, and application servers, to the focused functionality of select vertical solutions such as CRM, life sciences, or sales automation, IBM's eServer x206 and x306 are both products and proof points that support IBM's *Express* model of enabling elemental business processes through well considered technology and hardware solutions. In addition, IBM's Xtended Design Architecture (XDA) compliments the Scale Out portion of the IBM server marketecture in a model similar to the way its X-Architecture model illuminates the company's Scale Up axis. Overall, we believe IBM promotes a more consistent, value-driven approach with its entry-level solutions that is important to customers in two critical ways. First is the company's focus on blending advanced performance and utility into their Intel-based hardware offerings, as well as support and services that drive quick deployment and utilization. Second is the strategic infrastructure commitment IBM delivers to partners and SMB customers through its strategic *Express* offerings. SMB customers who are seeking a reliable IT platform for their business, or who require the ability to seamlessly expand or update their current business IT environments, are well advised to consider IBM's x206 and x306 entry-level server offerings for their IT planning and deployment processes.