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zSeries with Linux Provides an Opportune Platform for SAP Server Consolidation

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The IBM zSeries has long been used as a platform for the SAP database server due to its superior levels of reliability, flexibility, performance, and manageability. The acceptance of Linux on the zSeries as well as its nascent use for SAP offers new opportunities to SAP project managers to consolidate NT or UNIX application servers onto the zSeries and take advantage of increased capabilities as well as potential cost savings.

The Limitations of Distributed SAP

The SAP environment can be notoriously difficult for IT managers to wrestle with. From a management viewpoint, coordinating various workloads from multiple application servers with different data sets, different back-up requirements, and different running locations is complex. When everything works well, there are few problems; however, should something go wrong along the way, issues of data consistency can lead to severe problems. If the servers could be managed as one platform, it would be much easier to maintain and grow the application. The general availability of Linux on the mainframe as a leading new technology platform for SAP applications offers an attractive alternative with many benefits.

SAP on Linux on the Mainframe

Consolidating SAP applications to the mainframe presents multiple opportunities beyond improved service quality and manageability. The use of HiperSockets for internal connections between server partitions means that application servers communicate with the database almost at the speed of memory, improving overall systems performance and cutting batch window and database update times by 40-60%. In addition, intelligent workload management features ensure that the pertinent realtime applications get the required resources dedicated to them, and less important applications do not interfere with their availability.

An additional benefit is that through advanced virtualization capabilities new Linux servers can be created fairly quickly. This gives administrators a virtual sandbox for application development. New servers can be added for testing and development — within hours — and when they are finished, resources can be returned to the pool for redeployment almost immediately, providing more efficient use of system resources. Finally, managers can take advantage of running SAP applications on Linux and still place the critical Enqueue and Message processes on z/OS for maximum availability. Running SAP on Linux on the mainframe also strategically positions customers to take advantage of SAP NetWeaver and other future, 64-bit-based SAP solutions.

Who is Making the Leap

Existing mainframe users, or new customers who are considering placing the SAP database server on zSeries are prime candidates for application server consolidation on the mainframe platform. These users generally have issues such as too many physical UNIX or NT boxes running the infrastructure, a need for faster batch and update processes, or a desire to take advantage of new 64-bit SAP developments. Another category of customer that is more likely to see cost benefits are those with older platforms running application servers and who are thinking about upgrading to take advantage of forthcoming software changes. While the zSeries/SAP consolidation won't hold appeal for everyone, the cost savings and performance potential makes it something that enterprises should certainly consider.

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