



Instant Insight

April 3, 2008

## IBM Announces New Power Systems

*By Clay Ryder*

IBM has introduced the IBM Power System, the first of a new generation of servers unifying the former System i and System p product lines, which features simplified pricing and increased application choice as well as reduced energy and administration expense. As part of the new launch, IBM's integrated operating system formerly known as i5/OS will now be known as 'i'.

Key features of the new Power System family include:

- ◇ POWER6 processors
- ◇ POWER6 EnergyScale Technology that offers advanced energy control features
- ◇ PowerVM virtualization technology support for up to eighty virtual partitions
- ◇ Simultaneous support for AIX, Linux and i applications

There are three initial offerings from the new product family, which are targeted at SMBs:

- ◇ **i Edition Express for BladeCenter S** targets existing AS/400, iSeries, and System i 515, 520 and 525 customers that are looking to refresh or extend their existing investments as well as simplifying the integration of i applications with x86 servers. Customers can optionally migrate existing x86 servers onto x86 blades in the same BladeCenter chassis for increased integration and simplicity.
- ◇ **The IBM Power 520 Express** is designed for businesses running distributed applications, databases, and core business solutions.
- ◇ **The IBM Power 550 Express** is directed at organizations that seek very high performance and capacity in a mid-sized database server while also requiring continuous application availability.

The new Power servers are available in an i edition, AIX edition, or Linux edition. Each edition includes the server, packaged components, and the operating system. These editions offer customers a preconfigured offering that enables quick deployment. In addition, customers can also order a-la-carte to mix and match i, AIX, and Linux on a single Power server based upon their specific needs.

With this announcement, IBM Business Partners holding System i and System p certifications will be able to sell a combination of solutions and operating systems on the new unified Power platform. ISVs will have a single platform on which they can develop i, AIX, and Linux solutions, potentially broadening the audience for their applications, especially in multi-OS datacenters.

In a separate announcement, IBM Global Financing unveiled several IBM Power Systems financing offerings. Among the offerings are a "one platform, one monthly lease price" total solution financing for Power Systems that includes the hardware platform, OS, peripherals, and maintenance bundled in a single price. In certain geographies, there are special lower-rate financing and deferred payment programs available. In addition, mid-lease upgradeability for little or no change in monthly payments may be available for customers seeking to acquire the new technology.

### Net/Net

This is one announcement that we have been waiting to see for a long time, and we are elated that it has finally happened. While the continued gains in IBM's POWER6 processor are noteworthy, and its unique position in

the marketplace as a highly flexible multi-OS 64-bit platform should not be underestimated, what captures our attention is the unification of the former System i and System p product families. To our way of thinking, this unification bodes very well for the UNIX community and hopefully will put to rest the ongoing angst of whether or not IBM truly supports and believes in the beloved System i. To be clear, in this announcement System i aficionados have much to be thankful and a lot to look forward to.

While many of the advances of the Power processor family have made it to both the System p and System ii product lines, the absence of an i5/OS-supported blade has been a rather obvious omission. Happily, with this announcement, organizations that are serious about consolidating UNIX, Linux, and i5/OS applications into a simplified solution can now do this very task in a state-of-the-art blade environment. Since the BladeCenter S solution for i has starting prices that are at about half the price of comparable non-blade configurations, this new value proposition may prove attractive to customers that are still operating older System i, iSeries, or AS/400 servers but have had a difficult time justifying equipment refresh that may have simply meant a newer, faster server running the same applications.

The recognition that the value proposition of i is the software stack is a realization that we believe is long overdue. The longevity of the applications deployed on these environments is testimony to the load-it-and-forget-it simplicity that is so appealing to SMBs. With the new Power Systems, existing System i customers can increase performance and energy efficiency by migrating their mission-critical applications to new systems (standalone servers or blades) and continue to use the same i applications and operating system. For such organizations, the ability to embrace the future while consolidating the present may be the missing piece of the ROI puzzle that justifies new IT investment. Ultimately, for i, it's not about the hardware, it's the applications, and the administrative and user experience; all of which we believe are safe and potentially further enabled through the unified approach.

When one considers the processing agility of the POWER6, many workloads could be consolidated whether they are Web-oriented infrastructures based upon Linux and open source, i5/OS, or AIX. Through the PowerVM Lx86 (former System p AVE) developers could leverage existing x86 Linux apps or even continue to write Linux apps on their x86 workstations, and then take advantage of the scalability and efficiencies inherent in the POWER architecture when it comes time to deploy the app. This capability can also benefit ISVs as they instantly have a larger addressable market, especially in the higher end of performance needs, and can simply deliver their existing product and expertise for another platform.

For customers seeking native ports, this offers a stopgap by which the customer can deploy existing applications on Power and then swap out for native ports as they become available. Alternatively, given the native x86 support in the BladeCenter S, Linux applications could be moved from x86 to Power and back to x86-based blades as business requirements dictate. The benefit to VARs and SIs is the same, the option of selecting from thousands of additional applications to weave into a customer solution. With the new unified platform, VARs and SIs will likely have an easier time focusing on the customer solution and not explaining the differences between the historically different software stacks on the Power platform.

Overall, we are pleased with the scope and nature of this announcement. The value of Power as a cutting edge UNIX and Linux application platform remains evident. The heritage of the System i is assured and its existing customer base's loyalty has been rewarded. The Power System i Edition will continue to offer the integrated computing solution on which so many SMBs rely while at the same time, customers will be able to benefit from lower prices for server components and now have access to leading-edge blade environments on which to run all of their Power-based applications. The value of these applications is being redefined as more relevant than ever to a marketplace that is crying out for the operational and management ease of use typified by i environment. For Power platform users, it's been like an extended family holiday gathering. Some years some can make it, and others cannot. With the new Power Systems, we are happy to see that all of the siblings in IBM's Power platform i, Linux, and UNIX user communities will finally be able to come together under a unified platform while each maintains its own highly valued business propositions. This is a family reunion that would be worth attending.