Market Roundup
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Intel Announces Dual Core Xeon 5100 Processor Series

By Clay Ryder

Intel has announced the latest member of its Xeon processor family, the dual-core Intel Xeon Processor 5100 series, previously codenamed Woodcrest, which targets the high-volume server, workstation, communications, storage, and embedded market segments. These processors are based on the new Intel Core Microarchitecture that has the support of more than 200 server and workstation models planned from more than 150 manufacturers. The microarchitecture will also be the foundation for future mobile and desktop products branded as Intel Core 2 Duo processors.

The Xeon 5100 delivers up to 135% performance improvements with up to 40% reduction in energy consumption over previous Intel server processors. The 5100 series is drop-in compatible as part of Intel's Bensley Platform, which delivers faster and more reliable memory technology called FB-DIMMs (available today), Intel Virtualization Technology (Intel VT), Intel Active Server Manager (Intel AMT), and Intel I/O Acceleration Technology (Intel I/OAT). The processors also include Intel Advanced Smart Cache, which allows one of two cores to use the entire memory reservoir if necessary while the other is idle, and Intel Smart Memory Access that can reduce memory latency and bottlenecks. Intel will ship the 5100 series at up to 3.0GHz with 1333MHz front side bus and 4MB shared L2 cache or memory reservoir between both cores. The 3GHz version will ship with a thermal design point of 80 watts with all others rated at 65 watts. A lower voltage version will ship in the third quarter at 2.33GHz and a thermal design point of 40 watts. Pricing for the Intel Xeon processor 5100 family will range from $209 to $851 in 1,000-unit quantities, depending on features. Intel also announced extended lifecycle support of five to seven years for its communications, storage and embedded customers.

Chips are a fascinating exercise in the microcosms. How can something so small do so much with so little, especially considering it is made from sand? Nevertheless, the microprocessor is without a doubt one of the most relevant and fascinating inventions of modern times. With this announcement we see Intel continuing its mantra of improved capability and enhanced performance, but perhaps more importantly in this day and age, significant improvements in energy consumption and cooling needs. While performance increases of the past few years were achieved through CPUs with thermal characteristics more akin to soldering irons than processors, in today's densely packed form factors, this approach is not viable. The shift from screaming single cores to multi-core CPUs permits a reduction in current draw and thus heat, but it also achieves a higher level of efficiency as the multi-core processors can execute more instructions per clock cycle. Combined with the advancements in processor cache sharing and fully buffered RAM, these new processors are not surprisingly achieving substantial performance gains for the same amount of energy and physical real estate. Overall, with pun intended, these processors are pretty darn cool.

Of course, cool technology is for naught without support of the industry overall, and Intel has done considerable work in lining up support for Xeon 5100 through numerous OEM server vendors as well as driving the availability of the new FB-DIMM memory through many memory vendors. Server vendors such as HP which has recently made energy consumption and cooling a major competitive issue will undoubtedly be elated with the thermal characteristics of the new Xeon processor. With AMD's aggressive marketing around energy consumption and Intel now joining the competitive fray, we are poised for a much greener message coming from IT vendors. Perhaps the industry will develop the equivalent of the U.S. EPA miles-per-gallon rating for vehicles to describe

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the workload accomplished per watt. Nevertheless, for organizations that are daunted by the tasks of simplifying their IT infrastructure, supporting increased workloads, and reducing expenditures all while coming against the physical limits of power, cooling, and space in the datacenter, the Xeon 5100 processor family should offer a glimpse of hope for the future.

Managing Channel Sales

By Tony Lock

Over the last eighteen months Salesforce.com has made a number of high profile and, more importantly, highly significant announcements as the company has rapidly developed its ability to deliver applications "on demand" to a wide community of users. This week the company has launched a Partner Relationship Management (PRM). Partnerforce, Salesforce Partner Edition, is an application that seeks to address the increasingly common and notoriously tricky issue of managing partner channels to optimize sales opportunities for organizations that employ indirect routes to bring their offerings to market. In effect, Partnerforce will allow companies using Salesforce.com's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to make customer information available to its channel partners. Information is made available to the partner community through a simple to use, and easy to access, Web portal that can be accessed via any supported Web browser. At the same time, the portal can capture key metrics on the channel partner's sales and lead management processes, potentially providing the organization with a near complete view of the entire sales pipeline, direct and indirect. The software includes dashboard facilities to provide focused information to users on the realtime situation. Lead management capabilities are also included permitting leads to be distributed through both the direct sales organization and channel partners in line with company polices and agreements. The software has also been built to provide tools to help foster the entire partner recruitment, marketing, selling, and monitoring processes. The software will be available for use from July 12, 2006 to organizations using Salesforce.com's Salesforce Enterprise Edition or Unlimited Edition. The additional functionality will cost $1,500 per partner per year and includes subscriptions for five partner login identities.

The importance of Partner and Channel sales grows day by day. Even large organizations that have traditionally utilized direct sales as their primary route to market now recognize the importance of employing various partners in the sales process. The use of channel partners is particularly important to organizations that sell to the "SMB" (small and mid-tier market sectors). For the vast majority of organizations the only viable methods to reach this huge potential customer base are via the Web or through channel partners. Indeed, even selling via the Web is frequently more effective when utilizing a variety of partners. For these reasons there is clearly a viable customer base for effective PRM solutions.

However, the very nature of selling via channel partners poses problems for the suppliers of PRM systems and the vendors that could benefit from deploying such tools. Chief among these is the fact that channel partners do not typically use computing platforms managed by the vendor themselves. Instead they have their own systems and support staff, the nature and skills of which may not match closely those of the primary organization. In these scenarios it can be problematic and expensive, if not impossible, to deploy traditional client-server applications. Equally the often volatile nature of channel sales relationships may also pose challenges to client-server solutions. The ability to access Salesforce Partner Edition via a Web browser in an "on demand" fashion neatly avoids the majority of these "technical" challenges leaving organizations free to concentrate on using the software to the benefit of all concerned, namely the optimization of sales efforts.

We are firmly of the opinion that the accessing of centrally managed systems via Web browsers is the future for a very large number of organizations, large and small. If Partnerforce has the functionality required to assist the management of channel sales efforts in a simple-to-use fashion, it will attract customers. If its use is coupled with other solutions available on the Salesforce AppExchange platform then the potential benefits to organizations could be extremely significant. The AppExchange platform represents a very profound development in IT service delivery history. While the release of Salesforce Partner Edition is another sign that Salesforce.com is becoming a very serious supplier of business applications, it is the AppExchange platform that holds the potential to change the face of IT service delivery and support in the years to come.

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HP Recycling

By Susan Dietz

HP recently announced a decision to expand its recycling program. In order to raise awareness of electronics recycling, and hopefully increase the rate of recycling among consumers, the company will host a series of product collection events in the United States throughout the summer. The collection events, which will accept a range of products from any manufacturer, will be held from June through September in Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, and Oregon. Customers can drop off a range of products from any manufacturer at no charge during these local events. The products collected will then be recycled at one of HP's recycling facilities. HP also is expanding its product take-back offering throughout Asia Pacific and Japan, where the company reports it has aligned its trade-in, refurbishing, and recycling operations to offer full asset-recovery services to customers in the area. These services match existing consolidated asset-recovery and recycling services offered in most of Europe and the Americas. Consumer collection programs also are planned for several as-yet unidentified locations in Australia, China and France.

HP is a vast company with a worldwide market, so any large-scale plan will most likely have a worldwide impact. Scattering recycling facilities around the planet especially for the decommissioning of old equipment is one of those large-scale plans, and it is hoped that the impact will indeed be worldwide. It's a timely decision on the part of HP. Technology has advanced to the point where companies are finally realizing that extending the shelf life of electronic equipment with upgrades is better than replacing entire units, and are starting to adopt a "cradle to grave" viewpoint. Thus refurbished equipment starts to have some legs, especially for smaller customers who are more financially limited.

The green faction is gaining in power, especially in California and Europe, what with both regions traditionally being leaders in ecological protection. This grassroots pressure is resulting in more legislation being put into place to protect Mother Nature, and companies are attempting to roll with the punches. By responding creatively to these new pressures, financial services can make a virtue out of a necessity by using equipment return as a part of a lease agreement, thus making the company more attractive to those who are concerned about either the environment or the new regulations, or both. This is most likely a boon to traditionally slightly overlooked areas, the emerging markets. Third-world or emerging markets often get the remarketed hardware and don't have the resources to recycle. We have written about this being a problem in the past, with third-world countries renting themselves out as dumping grounds for electronics due to economic necessity, while lacking the ability to properly dispose of their own electronics. However, HP has the ability to overcome emerging markets' infrastructure issues due to its size and worldwide presence, and it looks like this may just be part of their plan. If so, kudos. This is something that's been needed for awhile, and it looks like HP is the company to take up the challenge.

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