

IBM Strides Toward Virtual Computing With Developer VPN

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IBM's new virtual private network (VPN) for developers will reduce its development costs and bring the company a step closer to its vision of "virtualized" computing power.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 27 November 2001, IBM launched a secure VPN to provide developers with remote worldwide access to its Solution Partnership Centers (SPCs).

Analysis

IBM has made a smart move that will likely reduce costs by allowing the company to reach more developers in more geographical locations. Costs will decrease because IBM will not have to rely completely on its SPCs to support developers in creating solutions on IBM platforms and on equipment from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). As physical centers, the SPCs are expensive to build, equip and maintain; as a result, there are not enough of them to be geographically convenient for all developers. With the virtualization of at least some resources via the VPN, developers will not have to incur the extra time and expense of travelling to an SPC to test products. Greater numbers of developers, therefore, will likely conduct testing. Increased testing and solution development eventually brings increased IBM hardware and software sales.

Serving a larger base of developers at a lower cost will also enable IBM to divide the cost of providing technology among many more users. This arrangement will make it easier to justify further initiatives economically.

This announcement reflects IBM's strategy of changing the development center from a managed model to an access model. The company plans to move away from data centers toward grids of computing power (e.g., the eLiza initiative). Computational grids belong to IBM's plan to virtualize computing power — a computational grid can eventually help to turn computing into a utility. Such a model would enable enterprises to access powerful, aggregated computing resources on a scale equal or even superior to today's mainframes as easily as plugging a cord into a wall socket. Enterprises wouldn't need to own the means of producing computing power. However, such power doesn't exist in any one place. A grid resembles an electrical utility's network in that a large number of computers would be linked together and load balanced.

Although the new VPN is not a computational grid, it will decrease the importance of deploying computers in a specific location in much the same way as a grid would. Whereas, many VPNs provide access to enterprise data, this particular implementation — through its use of remote computational power — complements that more robust computational strategies that IBM has announced for the future.

Analytical Source: Anthony Adams, IT Services Marketplaces

Need to Know: Reference Material and Recommended Reading

- "Global VPN" (DPRO-90307) A comprehensive analysis of traditional VPN services and the IP VPN services offered by prevailing service providers. **By Kathleen Adams and Joe Tuset**
- "Virtual Private Network Services in the U.S." (ITSV-WW-DP-0120) A look at the benefits and challenges of VPN services in the United States. **By Donald Stuart**

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