

Solaris 9 Should Make Sun More Competitive

George J. Weiss

Sun Microsystems says its Solaris 9 operating system (OS) can lower the total cost of ownership (TCO) of large server networks. But before committing to Solaris 9, enterprises should verify Sun's claims.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 27 May 2002, Sun's Solaris 9 Operating Environment became available. Solaris 9 integrates Sun's application server, resource manager and directory server as well as new capabilities such as firewall, volume manager and patch manager.

Analysis

Sun made this announcement to rejuvenate its market position in Web application servers, to bolster Solaris against Linux, and to attack IBM and Hewlett-Packard (HP).

Sun wants to change how IS organizations think about the OS. Traditionally, the OS performs the mundane tasks behind hardware execution. With Solaris 9, Sun repositions the OS as a strategic asset in lowering TCO for hundreds of servers in multitiered networks. Sun will likely argue that major returns on investment will accrue from the configuration, testing and integration of full software stacks (including directory services, security, patches, upgrades, and application and Web services) — costs usually borne by the enterprise. Windows/Intel and Linux/Intel deployments don't offer this advantage.

Throughout 2002, Gartner expects Sun to package and integrate separately priced options for change management, virtual resource management, reliability, availability and serviceability profiling (for preventive diagnostics), application server, and Sun Open Net Environment (ONE) portal server. Then, through 1H04, Sun will likely tout Solaris as a "meta OS" for managing all resources including servers, storage and network (Sun's N1 strategy). This approach will complement Sun's hardware domains and will compete against HP's Utility Data Center and IBM's eLiza.

Sun has revamped its licensing strategy to address IS organizations' need for ease and speed of installation, provisioning and online maintenance. Solaris customers with support contracts will get Solaris 9 as part of the hardware package, regardless of system size. Customers without support contracts pay license fees by CPU configurations — \$249 for 2 CPUs, \$999 for 3 to 4 CPUs, \$160,000 for 33 to 64 CPUs and negotiated pricing above 64 CPUs.

Before committing to Solaris 9, customers should:

- Validate Sun's claimed performance benefits and efficiencies
- Check with their independent software vendors (ISVs) on progress with certifying applications
- Secure from Sun guarantees that support claims of reduced costs in Web, application and back-office software stacks

Customers with multivendor software stacks or with recent upgrades to Solaris 8 (some already with backported Flash and Upgrade) should delay upgrading to year-end 2002 until ISV certification and customer references validate the benefits.

Analytical Source: George Weiss, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "Sun's Unified Brand Will Help Its Software Strategy" (FT-16-2889). Rebranding several product lines as the Sun ONE will help Sun realize its new software strategy. **By Yefim Natis, Mark Driver and Daryl Plummer**
- "Sun Must Sharpen Its Focus on Software" (FT-16-5050). Departing executives add pressure on Sun to articulate its new software business strategy. **By Jim Cassell, Andrew Butler, Yefim Natis, George Weiss, Daryl Plummer, Charles Smulders and Paul McGuckin**

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