

Policy-Based Computing Services: The Vision, The Reality

Donna Scott

Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Sun and many market entrants have policy-based computing services (PBCS) initiatives. PBCS will reduce costs and improve service, but much needs to be done to realize the vision.

ANALYSIS

IS organizations and IT vendors are living in desperate times. The economy is down. Enterprises and service providers have overprovisioned their IT infrastructures, so few intend to increase spending, or even maintain 2001 spending levels. At the same time, system management costs are escalating — it was only a matter of time before the complexity of n-tier architectures strained IT support and operations budgets and capabilities. Furthermore, distributed computing infrastructures cannot be shared across enterprises because they were designed for a single purpose within a single departmental budget. As a result, it is no surprise that the top two priorities for CIOs are to reduce spending and increase shareholder returns, according to Gartner's 2002 EXP CIO survey.

IT vendors are suffering too. Server vendors, in particular, have been hit hard by the economic downturn because of their thin-margin, commodity business model. In response, server vendors believe that they need to promote a new model for computing infrastructures — policy-based computing services (PBCS) — that reduces costs and increases service quality. Based on past experience, vendors believe that enterprises and service providers will buy to save money, which creates a mutually beneficial scenario for struggling server vendors and their customers.

This edition of the Hardware Platforms Spotlight highlights the problems in the computing environment, and describes the evolution toward PBCS. The first group of Features focus on the PBCS vision, providing insights into Hewlett-Packard's, IBM's and Sun's PBCS initiatives, and into the tools that will enable this vision. The second group of Features describe technologies that already offer some level of PBCS.

Features

The Vision

"The Evolution Toward Policy-Based Computing Services" (SPA-16-8544). Introduces the value propositions of PBCS (reduced costs, improved service levels and increased agility) and describes the key requirements for enabling shared virtual resources. **By Donna Scott and Thomas Bittman**

"HP's Utility Data Center: First to Deliver" (T-16-9233). Describes the Utility Data Center and shows how it is already delivering some of the benefits of PBCS. **By Thomas Bittman and Donna Scott**

"IBM's 'eLiza' Initiative: Great Vision, Slow Results" (T-16-9153). Traces the origins of eLiza and IBM's autonomic computing initiative, and highlights how the lack of a coherent road map has caused IBM to lose ground to Hewlett-Packard. **By Thomas Bittman**

"Sun N1: A 'Me Too' Vision With Sparse Details" (T-17-0042). Explains that, although the N1 vision doesn't yet exist either as a road map or even in documentation, it is significant because of Sun's deep understanding of the distributed computing management problem. **By Donna Scott**

"NSM Tools: An Essential Ingredient of PBCS" (SPA-17-3143). Shows why there will be a renaissance in network and system management tools beginning in 2006, and that these will be the enablers of the full PBCS vision. **By Donna Scott and Cameron Haight**

The Reality

"Emerging Tools for Server Configuration Management" (M-15-5500). Describes how new-generation server-configuration tools offer the beginnings of policy-based server management by

dynamically determining when a new server needs to be deployed, and then automatically initiating the deployment. **By Ronni Colville and Donna Scott**

"Consider the Costs of Policy-Based Network Management" (DF-16-4809). Explains why policy-based network management is most effective when policy engines are installed at the edge of a network, but cautions that the cost and complexity of managing policies end-to-end and across multiple organizations often far exceed the expected savings. **By Bill Gassman**

"zSeries: A Microcosm of Policy-Based Computing Services" (DF-17-0435). Shows that, although much can be learned from the zSeries' many PBCS capabilities, its self-contained nature will limit its appeal for many enterprises. **By John Phelps**

"Six Actions to Get You on the Road Toward PBCS" (DF-17-4347). Lists the actions enterprises must take to prepare for the arrival of new PBCS technologies, all of which provide some of the benefits of PBCS. **By Donna Scott and Thomas Bittman**

This research is part of a set of related research pieces. See "Policy-Based Computing Services: The Future of Computing" for an overview.

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