

MySQL Will Open IBM System i to New Applications and Customers

Donald Feinberg

MySQL's and IBM's plan for the MySQL database management system to run on the System i platform brings hundreds of new applications to System i and should be welcome news to small and midsize businesses.

Event

On 25 April 2007, MySQL and IBM announced a joint agreement to port the open-source software (OSS) database management system (DBMS) MySQL to the IBM System i (formerly the AS/400) platform. The MySQL DBMS will run on i5/OS, using DB2 for i5/OS as the storage engine for MySQL.

Analysis

Since the release of MySQL Version 5.0 in late 2005 — and more recently the release of MySQL Enterprise — a growing number of application software vendors have been porting to or developing initially with MySQL. Version 5.0 added the necessary functionality for running complete applications, and MySQL Enterprise delivered simple, easy-to-use installation and support utilities, which allows an IT organization with average technical skills to install and use MySQL without in-depth system knowledge of OSS software and procedures. MySQL is a fully functional DBMS, but it requires the developer to choose a storage engine to sit under the MySQL DBMS layer. There are currently 12 choices of storage engines usable with MySQL. This announcement adds DB2 for i5/OS as an additional choice. This will be the second pre-installed storage engine delivered as a package from MySQL.

One of the factors we feel has limited the growth of MySQL in small and midsize businesses (SMBs) and large IT organizations with an average level of technical expertise was the complexity of assembling the software. The MySQL Enterprise subscriptions, along with this announcement, show that the MySQL DBMS is maturing to a level that now will appeal to these same organizations. With the addition of IBM's endorsement, System i and DB2 for i5/OS, MySQL adds a level of scalability and stability far beyond any of the previous storage engines available and now runs on one of the most widely installed operating platforms in the market. All of these factors help to lower the entry barrier for more technologically conservative organizations.

For IBM, this has a number of implications:

- It opens the System i platform to hundreds of new applications available on the MySQL DBMS platform.
- It gives the current client base on System i a large variety of new choices.
- It helps IBM re-invigorate the platform for SMBs.
- It is the first non-IBM DBMS to run on the System i platform.

We believe this is a good move on the part of the System i hardware group within IBM. Unfortunately, it also continues to distance the System i platform from the mainstream IBM Software Group, where the DB2 DBMS for System i is not function- and feature-compatible with the DB2 DBMS on z/OS, Linux, Unix and Windows. This will continue to cause confusion for IBM customers with both System i and other IBM hardware platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- IBM System i customers looking for new or replacement applications can now consider applications available using MySQL. Many of these are specifically geared to SMBs — the primary customers of System i.
- IT organizations with average technical skills looking to use MySQL should consider this (and MySQL Enterprise) as an additional signal that MySQL is maturing and can be used for more than testing.
- Look for MySQL to accelerate its rate of adoption for more mission-critical applications.

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Preparing for an Open-Source Software DBMS World" — With increases in the number of OSS entries and the maturing functionality of OSS DBMS engines, the OSS movement is gaining headway in the DBMS market. **By Donald Feinberg**
- "Hype Cycle for Data Management, 2006" — The Gartner Hype Cycle for Data Management can help organizations understand the relative maturity of these technologies, the benefits of adoption and key factors for successful deployment. **By Ted Friedman and others**

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REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters

56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters

Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters

Gartner Australasia Pty. Ltd.
Level 9, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Japan Headquarters

Gartner Japan Ltd.
Aobadai Hills, 6F
7-7, Aobadai, 4-chome
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042
JAPAN
+81 3 3481 3670

Latin America Headquarters

Gartner do Brazil
Av. das Nações Unidas, 12551
9º andar—World Trade Center
04578-903—São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509