

## **Merced, Non Merci**

### ***IBM Charts Its Own Course to 64 Bit UNIX and Beyond***

While other major vendors are standing in line to develop 64-bit UNIX systems based on Intel's upcoming Merced chip, IBM has plans of its own.

As noted in a recent issue of *InternetWeek*, IBM is missing from the list of UNIX OS and hardware systems vendors with plans for the Merced processor. Although it will support Windows NT on Merced in its NetFinity server line, the article says, "IBM will continue to use the 64-bit PowerPC chip in its RS/6000 servers and will enhance that chip to be competitive with Merced."

Is IBM missing an opportunity in not jumping on the Merced bandwagon? Not according to Mike Borman, General Manager of RS/6000 for IBM.

For one thing, the 64-bit PowerPC chip is here today, while the first release of Merced is still one or two years away. As Borman also points out, IBM already has the most scalable and upgradeable UNIX product suite in the industry. "Customers can start with a few workstations and grow to 500-node SMP systems." And, with the wide range of RS/6000 workstations and servers available, "Customers can quickly and easily upgrade performance while running the same applications."

In terms of processor enhancements, Borman expects a new RS/6000 Model S70 server announcement in August, as well as new workstation announcements in October, which will significantly increase processing speed. These upgrades, he says, ""will double performance this year and triple performance by next year as measured by industry benchmarks."

But the strengths of the RS/6000 product line go beyond hardware scalability and speed. Another key differentiator is the software platform. A recent report by VARBusiness magazine rated AIX as the number one UNIX operating system. In a survey of 151 systems resellers, AIX scored at the top for reliability, ease of installation and configuration, security, and vendor support.

"The RS/6000 has been remarkably successful since its introduction eight years ago," Borman says. "There are over 650,000 installed worldwide and this will grow to 750,000 by the end of this year." He sees continuing growth in four market segments:

1. Industry-specific applications developed by solution providers writing applications on AIX.
2. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and supply chain management.

3. "Deep Computing," which includes both business intelligence and the scientific and technical application areas. Borman notes that IBM has a large established base in universities and laboratories, and is currently under contract to the U.S. Department of Energy to build the an RS/6000 SP which will be the world's fastest supercomputer.
4. The booming market for e-business solutions. The RS/6000 is one of the world's most popular Web servers, whether running Lotus Domino or other Web server software.

"In terms of Merced," Borman concludes, "right now, IBM is completely comfortable with its microprocessor roadmap." This roadmap will, over the next four years, deliver products with increasing speed and capabilities, culminating in a planned gigaprocessor in the year 2001. "It is the strongest product plan and microprocessor plan in the business, and I'm optimistic the RS/6000 will continue to do very well."

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