Vendor-Neutral Approaches Save Money

Avoiding one-size-fits-all thinking in the modern datacenter

June 14, 2011

Keep an eye out for typos.
Details are at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

Brand loyalty's not what it used to be

Until quite recently it was unusual to have more than one brand of hardware in the datacenter for any one given purpose. All the servers and storage were IBM, and all the networking gear was Cisco, for example. The only opportunity for any other hardware seller to get a foothold was in relatively obscure positions like network attached backup, or a dedicated web server. Major brands didn't have to do much to keep customers loyal because for the most part, customers were vendor locked and didn't have much choice short of a rip-and-replace. But the twofold pressures of constricting economic conditions and increasing diversity in all the hardware niches have turned that brand loyalty - or if not loyalty, at least vendor-lock- completely on its head. Add in the progression of virtualization from the bleeding edge into the mainstream, and daily operations on today's datacenter floor would be almost unrecognizable to a time traveler arriving from just ten years in the past.

The funny thing is, most original equipment manufacturer (OEM) marketing materials and websites continue to promote products as if the homogenous single-vendor datacenter were still the norm. In actual fact, according to a recent study by Symantec, virtualization and cloud adoption is pervasive within the SMB and midmarket, and a large number of enterprises are embracing the private cloud model and a hyper-virtualized hardware environment that makes the brand name on the box less and less relevant, and its ease of assimilation more and more critical. Businesses are less interested in chap bells and whistles, and the relative maturity of server, storage and networking products suggests this widespread commoditization is only going to continue until a revolutionary and as yet-unknown, must-have technology rises up in the marketplace. And even then, the new technology will need to adapt to the reality of today's widely distributed, hyper-virtualized data centers, rather than the other way around.

Decentralized hardware maintenance

One of the often-overlooked drag factors holding companies back from embracing greater innovation in the datacenter is the hardware maintenance

coverage that has to provide a rapid response when hardware inevitably fails over time. Maintenance from the OEMs follows the same single-brand, rigid model as their sales materials, and for good reason - there's not much incentive for IBM to give you certified, low-cost support for your EMC storage. But inevitably when there's a problem, and more than one OEM brand's support teams are involved, the problem will always be the fault of the other guy. Islands of support only serve to wall off and complicate datacenter productivity and can be a serious liability in the event of a major failure.

Moving control of hardware maintenance to a vendor-neutral third party provider makes sense under these mixed-vendor, highly commoditized conditions. TERiX Computer Service, in particular, makes an explicit promise of interoperability when it comes to support on multiple OEM brands. That means when a supported hardware system has a failure, it's fixed within SLA parameters regardless of whether the box says IBM, HP, EMC, Cisco, Sun or any of the other 30+ OEMs that TERiX covers. And with Fix First, even if a product isn't covered on a contract, TERiX will perform the repair first and then determine the cost.

Third party providers can also support hardware that the OEM no longer supports, due to End of Service Life or other reasons (Itanium on Sun hardware comes to mind). When combined with the fact that third party support can run 20% to 30% less on average for equivalent Service Level Agreement (SLA) maintenance, the advantages of unlinking OEM product from OEM maintenance make a great deal of sense in most large data centers, especially those that have opted for a private cloud model rather than moving production into the public cloud entirely.

Free Maintenance Consultation

TERiX support plans are optimized for enterprise installations that mix vendors, lifecycles, and/or locations. Unlike outmoded single-vendor support, you can not only save money but gain significant flexibility in your deployment by switching your maintenance over to TERiX. Let us know some basic information about your business and your datacenter locations, and we'll show you the advantages and savings that you might be missing out on if you're trying to manage maintenance through multiple OEMs. Click through to find out more!

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