



**Maintenance Perspectives**  
Ways to get more from your hardware agreements

## **It's Dead Only When You Say It's Dead: The legacy implications of the Oracle/HP Itanium ruckus**

March 28, 2011

**Keep an eye out for typos.**

Details are at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

### **Who is the Decider?**

Oracle's recent declaration that the Itanium chipset is nearing its end-of-life, cited as one reason it is ending development of software for systems based on the chip, brings up a curious point: Who actually decides when a product is obsolete?

IDG writer Agam Shah on arnnet.com provides an excellent [overview](#) of the issue, including responses from involved parties on all sides. Rather than rehash the specifics in the article regarding the announcement and the responses from Intel and HP, let's glimpse the bigger picture of what factors affect an OEM's decision to declare a product - any product - End-of-Service-Life (EOSL).

Advances in technology drive most such announcements, or the simple passage of time if development is on a schedule rather than driven directly by research results. Note that in the case of Itanium it's not the manufacturer making the announcement, one of the reasons it has caused such a stir. But in fairness Intel doesn't create the business software and middleware that runs on the system, after all, so any EOSL announcement on their part could be prompted only by hardware evolution rather than anything to do with the applications the chipset is running. With this in mind, however, the lack of a clear upgrade path for the chip may have been its undoing. Oracle did not see a long term demand for the technology in the marketplace, so there was no ongoing business value in continuing support for the chip.

We can speculate whether or not Oracle would have made such an announcement if they were not also the owners of Sun, which builds hardware that competes directly against the HP/Itanium hardware product in the server marketplace. Oracle clearly would prefer to only run software on its own hardware, but was prohibited from making that broad of a rule for its customers; in the short term, however, they can consolidate market share by making declaring competing hardware components inconveniently EOSL. And while there is likely some degree of competition-killing in their motivation, the costs of developing two sets of software for two separate and

incompatible chip lines is also a legitimate issue. It's not as if the difference between Itanium and x86 is only a part name or a form factor. For Oracle, the end of Itanium is thus a win-win, and after the fact, the only real question is why they didn't make this declaration much sooner.

## You make the final decision

The linked article above goes into some detail regarding how costly this announcement is going to be for businesses who feel they have to make a choice for either hardware or software. The false dilemma is a choice between ripping-and-replacing either the now-apparently-defunct hardware, or the equally painful route of converting from Oracle software to HP or some other provider to continue to use the existing hardware. There are more than these two options, however, and one of them is likely to cost and risk less and therefore find more support among IT management. Third party hardware and/or software maintenance providers allow companies to preserve existing assets - either for a phased transition to new systems, or into the future as-is, as-needed.

The truth is that the Itanium chip today, and the software systems today, are the same hardware and software they were before any mud was stirred up. If they worked well before, they will continue to work well until business owners, not the manufacturers, opt for different solutions. The reality is that the critical part of EOSL is the end of support life for existing products; the items don't suddenly stop functioning no matter who says what at any OEM or direct manufacturer. A thriving ecosystem of third party support providers for software and for hardware can support your existing systems as-is, indefinitely, and in the case of the Itanium, for substantially less than either rip-and-replace scenario in the false dilemma is likely to cost.

## Free Maintenance Consultation

Third party software support can maintain an existing version of an Oracle software package, and may be able to support multiple other vendors and assist in transition as well. For maximum flexibility, a third party hardware maintainer is crucial for bestowing real hardware independence and managing interoperability and hardware migration without lapses in coverage. Talk with a TERiX sales consultant and let us know some [basic information](#) about your business and your datacenter locations, and we can get in touch quickly with relevant information so you can compare vendors and capabilities. [Click through](#) to find out more!

## Did you spot a typo?

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