Collaboration: The Key to Optimized Server Configuration

Companies with specialized server needs understand the value of a custom, purpose-built server solution. But configuring a server to provide the perfect balance of functionality, performance and scalability—and doing so within budget constraints—is not always a straightforward process. Getting to the right server requires close collaboration with a custom server supplier.

The best collaborative processes occur when the supplier understands the buyer's needs and constraints, the buyer understands the supplier's capabilities, and both parties are determined to work together to find an optimal solution. Some of the issues that are important for buyers to share with the supplier include:

- The immediate purpose of the servers being purchased, as well as any longer-term possibilities for expanding or re-purposing the server's role.
- Specific technical requirements, such as anticipated load on the server or computational processing speed.
- Budget, space, energy efficiency, and other constraints and requirements.
- Purchase plans for the remainder of the current budget cycle.
- Required lead times to build and deploy the server.
- Desire for long-term locked Bill of Materials, or, conversely, for continual updates as new technologies are introduced.

Once all of this information is understood, appropriate components of an ideal solution can be defined.

Collaboration in the Real World

Let's look at a few examples of how collaboration adds value in the server configuration process.

Software companies might load their applications onto a server, and deliver the application/server combination to their end customer as a ready-to-deploy appliance.

These companies require a special kind of collaboration with their server suppliers—one that necessitates a high level of trust. They must be willing to provide the next version of their software to the server solution provider in advance of its release to the public. Only with full and early access to the software can the server provider optimize the hardware that it will run on.

The best server for a data center environment must be optimized for load requirements, performance demands, energy use constraints, cooling efficiency, rack space utilization and other factors. The complex interplay of these factors often means that an off-the-shelf server won't do the job—the data center must work directly with a custom server provider to achieve the optimal server configuration.

Public sector institutions (government agencies, public universities, etc.) often have tighter budgetary and timing constraints than their private-sector counterparts. Without a highly collaborative server provider, it would be challenging to configure a solution that can be delivered on time and within the allocated IT budget.

Looking Ahead

An important part of server configuration is planning for the future. Only you know where your organization has been and where you are going. If you don't communicate those things to your server supplier, you may end up with a server configuration that is overkill for your needs—or one that you quickly outgrow.

To zero in on the most effective solution for your unique performance requirements, budget constraints, and timeline, you should openly discuss the following questions with your server supplier:

- What are my options?
- What happens to cost and performance if I select one option over another?
- If I choose these options, what effect does that have on lead time, if any?
- What are the benefits and downsides to choosing one option over another?

Will your server supplier take the time to provide answers to questions like these with your best interests in mind? If not, you may be talking to the wrong supplier. Working together toward a single goal is the best way to get the most value out of your server investment, both now and in the future.

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