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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

Resident Bloggers

Stephen Ibaraki
Industry Analyst
FCIPS, I.S.P., DFNPA, CNP,
MVP



Barnaby Jeans
IT Pro Advisor
Microsoft Canada
[Linked in profile](#)

What's Happening with Server Consolidation, Server Virtualization Part 2/2

I had a conversation which triggered this blog on virtualization. Here's part 2/2:

You will notice an uptake especially in 2006 in virtualization news and announcements. As just one example, Intel's silicon-level support for virtualization of the CPU (Intel VT) and Directed I/O (Intel VT-d) has garnered significant press attention with support from major virtualization software providers such as Microsoft. In 2006, you will see a significant increase in spending from the major chips vendors (Intel, AMD) and virtualization software providers in educating the public about virtualization benefits. As a daily blogger and co-host for the [Canadian IT Managers forum](#) (CIM), I'm planning to blog about virtualization much more frequently since there is strong justification for the move. This rapid uptake in education will increase virtualization penetration from a side-note to mainstream in 2009. Moreover, in my daily discussions with IT leaders, I see a dramatic increase in their focus: on improving IT infrastructure efficiency and agility fueling business needs—virtualization is a major solution to satisfy these drivers. By late 2008, expect virtualization to be widespread as IT managers work to reduce server sprawl through consolidation resulting in a doubling of server utilization. Basically this means, there will be a substantive reduction in the number of servers and the individual server resources will be more efficiently used.

The biggest past barriers to virtualization take-up were: technology maturity, cost, performance, management/automation, education, and anticipated chip support. These are all actively addressed in 2006.

Wider education on virtualization benefits from the major chips vendors (Intel, AMD), and virtualization software providers (Microsoft) are happening this year with significant increases in spending in this area. However, education was delayed until the technology, both in hardware and software, reached sufficient maturity. This is happening in 2006 and will continue to escalate until 2009 when virtualization will be the norm and at all levels in the marketplace.

A prime initiator for virtualization is the wide-scale deployments of 64-bit servers, dual-core chips [later multi-core]. This is happening in 2006. Moreover, chip-level support for virtualization from Intel (Intel VT and Intel VT-d) and AMD (Pacifica) which includes needed direct I/O support will provide an added rationale for virtualization starting in 2006. This will place virtualization on the roadmap for IT decision makers in 2006 since virtualization performance is supported in hardware and at low cost.

This then raises the issue of low cost, high performance support through virtualization software. This will happen in 2006 built up on the virtualization evolution occurring at the chip-level and will continue to build-out in the next four years. As just one example, Microsoft already has a [full virtualization solution](#) and in April announced [Virtual Server 2005 R2 Enterprise Edition](#) is free to download. Bruce [blogged](#) about it here too! Moreover, Microsoft announced hypervisor (intrinsic virtualization support in the OS) in 2005 with embedded support in the future release of Longhorn. This breaks the price/performance barrier resulting in wide-spread use by 2009. During this same time frame, wide-spread deployment of built-in automation technologies to make management easier [including server provisioning on the fly and hot application migration on the fly] will make virtualization the norm.

Seven key reasons to virtualization:

- 1) **Reducing high operational costs:** consistently a top priority for executives is to reduce IT operational costs. The most straight forward solution is to reduce server sprawl through server consolidation by virtualization. Server virtualization allows multiple guest operating systems to reside on a single server making more efficient use of available resources, cutting staffing and maintenance costs.
- 2) Businesses often employ **legacy mission critical applications running on older operating platforms** which are costly to maintain, not secure, and in jeopardy of failing. Running the application and operating environment in a virtualized environment on new hardware resolves these problems.
- 3) **Peaks in the operating workload** are common creating workflow bottlenecks and requiring complex administration across multiple servers. Virtualization will greatly simplify the workload balancing.
- 4) **Inefficiencies in testing and deployment of applications** require dedicated servers and a waste of resources and time. Virtualization removes this need and allows the quick reconfiguration of systems.
- 5) Complex regulatory requirements, constant security threats, and global instability mandate **disaster recover upgrades** to your network. Virtualization is an effective solution and used in more than 50% of enterprises who employ virtual servers.
- 6) The return on investment (ROI) for virtualization is 3 to 6 months.
- 7) An added incentive is the **free availability of virtualization software**.

Cheers,
Stephen Ibaraki, FCIPS, I.S.P.

Published Tuesday, May 30, 2006 8:49 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)

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John Oxley
Director IT Pro Evangelism
Microsoft Canada



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