



Microsoft Hot on VMware's Trail



Microsoft is aggressively scaling up its virtualization portfolio to tackle VMware's dominance in the virtualization space. Its strategy is the usual one it swears by; to benefit from cross-sell by offering an integrated portfolio of products aimed at virtualizing the entire array of server, application, storage and presentation in the enterprise.

It will launch two new products within the next one month called Microsoft Hyper-V Server 2008 and System Center Virtual Machine Manager 2008. Hyper-V Server 2008 allows customers to consolidate Windows or Linux workloads onto a single physical server.

The virtual machine manager will enable customers to configure and deploy new virtual machines and centrally manage their virtualized infrastructure, whether running on Microsoft or VMware virtual platforms.

Microsoft will make available the Hyper-V 2008 server software free of cost. It will be downloadable via the web, free.

Microsoft also is hoping to undo VMware's advantage by drawing attention to the substantial price differential that it claims exists between solutions by VMware and itself.

Radhesh Balakrishnan, Microsoft's director for Virtualization, Server and Tools Division said, "VMware's price point is on the higher side. By keeping the price high, they have limited the percentage of people getting the benefit of virtualization. Only 12% of servers are virtualized today, although 100% of servers are being utilized below 50% of their capacity. But because the cost of entry is so high, customers opt to virtualize only their most critical applications."

"We offer solutions at one-third of VMware's cost and with added functionality," said Radhakrishnan. Microsoft is also going all-out to win over enterprises by offering tools that help them understand the intricacies involved in adopting virtualization.

It has launched the Microsoft Integrated Virtualization ROI Tool, a software that produces a detailed representation of the total cost advantage that Microsoft's virtualization solutions deliver in comparison with other options in the market.

Besides, the solution accelerator - Offline Virtual Machine Servicing Tool helps customers automate the process of updating virtual machines. This, according to Microsoft, will help enterprises manage the updation of large numbers of offline virtual machines as per individual needs.

With the adoption of Windows Server 2008 Hyper-V on the rise, customers like Microland (a leading specialist IT Infrastructure Services Provider) are already vouching for the virtualization promise that Microsoft delivers." Our experience from implementing Microsoft's virtualization in our e-learning solution for the engineering community has been extremely positive, and we are confident of the value proposition that it offers to enterprises," said K S Ganesan, chief technology officer, Microland.

Another factor Microsoft is banking heavily on to gain an advantage in the virtualization products market is collaboration with other vendors. "We have taken the MS-Novell relationship to virtualization as well, so you can run a Suse on top of Windows thanks to virtualization and vice versa, and we truly support it. We are also looking at the day when Solaris can run on Windows and vice versa and are working closely with Sun (Microsystems) for that."

So is VMware losing its shine? Although it still commands more than 75% of the server virtualization market, its technology lead over rivals has shrunk from two years to six to nine months, according to a recent Yankee Group report.

The raised floor does seem a little shaky under VMware's hypervisor.