

Atos Origin boosts mainframe efficiency and value with IBM



Overview

■ The Challenge

Deliver improved price-performance; introduce faster, more cost-effective disaster recovery capabilities; simplify infrastructure and improve customer service levels; offer more customer choice and value by supporting new workloads

■ The Solution

Strategic migration of customer mainframe environments to three IBM System z platforms, for greater flexibility and performance; added fourth System z platform with Capacity Backup Upgrade, for low-cost enterprise-class disaster recovery

■ The Benefit

Standard hardware and operating system for managed customers, for easier support; ability to restore systems to backup server more quickly and easily; CBU enables spare capacity to be maintained at low cost

Atos Origin (www.atosorigin.co.uk) is a major international IT services provider, employing 50,000 professionals in 50 countries. The company offers integrated design, build and operate solutions to large multi-national clients in targeted industry sectors, and has annual revenues of around £3.5 billion. The Atos Origin business approach is based on establishing long-term partnerships that encourage success through mutual benefit.

An important part of Atos Origin's UK business is managed services – from basic server hosting through to full lifecycle management for both hardware and applications.

The company has several major data centre operations, providing full 24/7 support for business-critical customer environments. For its mainframe customers, Atos Origin is taking advantage of IBM System z technology to drive improved internal efficiency and enhanced customer service.

Colin Clews, Location Services Service Unit Manager, explains: "With each new generation of IBM hardware and operating system, data centre operations become easier – so we can focus our energies on delivering better value to our managed customers. With our z890 servers, our customers have better performance, improved flexibility and better disaster recovery

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Atos Origin

capabilities – all with the usual ultra-high System z availability.”

Smooth path to change

As part of an initiative to standardise the environments it supports, Atos Origin has migrated several of its customer environments to separate IBM System z platforms in its primary UK data centre, and plans more migrations for 2006.

The z890 brings the latest mainframe innovations within easy reach of small and mid-market customers, together with outstanding flexibility and growth options.

Gary Poulton, MVS Team Leader, Managed Operations, says, “Atos Origin is always looking to improve service levels for our managed customers. By migrating their systems from 31-bit to 64-bit mode, and standardising on z/OS 1.4 running on z890 hardware, we’ve improved performance and ensured that they can take advantage of the latest technologies. From an internal perspective, we’ve simplified the support, which has freed up resources for higher value customer services.”

Faster recovery

As part of its new mainframe strategy, Atos Origin moved its disaster recovery capabilities in-house, installing a fourth z890 in a secondary UK data centre.

This server features IBM Capacity Backup Upgrade (CBU), which enables its capacity to be dramatically increased if and when it is required to take over the production workload from the other servers. With CBU,

this spare capacity attracts no maintenance or software licensing costs until it is actually activated.

“CBU is a great innovation,” comments Gary Poulton. “We now replicate customer data asynchronously to the second data centre, and we can simply IPL the backup z890 in the event of a disaster. Using the HMC, we can just turn on the additional power if it is needed, growing from a single engine to four.

“The great advantage is that we pay only for the maintenance on standard capacity, while keeping all that extra capacity in reserve.”

Prior to the introduction of CBU on the new z890, Atos Origin worked with an external provider for disaster recovery. Not only was this more costly, but also the recovery times were longer – up to 48 hours. With CBU, all applications can be restarted in less than two hours from a failure in the primary data centre – reducing the potential damage to business in the event of an outage.

Colin Clews says, “With CBU on the z890, we have brought our disaster recovery capabilities in-house, and significantly improved the speed and ease of restoring our customer environments. Over five years, we estimate that our disaster recovery costs will be reduced by as much as 38 per cent.”

Open to future possibilities

Atos Origin is now investigating the strategic possibilities that System z technology offers as a low-cost, resilient platform for Linux. The company has implemented an

Integrated Facility for Linux (IFL) engine on the largest of its z890 servers as a test-bed for Linux on the mainframe. The company will run Linux virtual servers under the z/VM operating system, connected via FICON to its SAN, as the first step in extending the value and flexibility of Linux out to its mainframe customer base.

“From a support and delivery perspective, the mainframe is unbeatable in our opinion,” comments Colin Clews. “With Linux on the mainframe, we anticipate bringing new workloads into the mainframe environment, which will reduce costs and increase flexibility for our customers.

“When you consider the cost of licences, maintenance and networking on a large estate of servers, the value proposition of Linux on the System z platform is very clear. Everything can run in a single physical footprint, managed by fewer people, with no external networking.

“And with z/VM, we can deliver a new Linux server, fully configured with a database, in less than 20 minutes. Many enterprises that currently run large server farms will know that it can take around two weeks to order, install and configure a new physical server – with Linux on the mainframe, they could respond significantly faster and at lower incremental cost to new business requirements.”

Delivering the on demand vision

The possibility of running Linux and mainframe operating systems side-by-side on the new System z platforms

has opened new strategic horizons for Atos Origin in the UK. Colin Clews comments, “With Linux on the System z platform, our non-mainframe customers will have the option to put their distributed applications back together on a single physical server.

“The high-speed internal networking on the z890 will deliver dramatic improvements in throughput between applications – making integration tighter and faster.”

Linux on the mainframe will also help Atos Origin to develop an on demand computing model for UK customers, enabling them to pay for computing power on a transactional basis.

“With z/VM, we can provision new Linux servers very rapidly, and measure capacity usage very precisely,” says Colin Clews. “If customers need more power, we can just turn it on almost instantly, and bill them accordingly.

“We think that the on demand flexibility offered by Linux on the System z platform will be very attractive to customers who currently run large distributed server environments, enabling them to reduce costs and increase responsiveness.”

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