



Culling the Mainframe Herd — Sun Seeks IBM's Small Mainframe Customers

Analyst: Anne MacFarland

Sun is out to cull the mainframe herd of its older small mainframes which Sun believes are money-guzzlers. It wants to convert these small dinosaurs into midrange Sun servers. **Sun says that IBM doesn't care very much about these customers and, in spite of numerous new mainframe models and pricing schemes, IBM has done very little for the class of "regular guy" stable customers running less than 1000 MIPS.** That is, except to encourage them to migrate to the *zSeries*, and to keep making those hefty monthly payments for recurring software license charges.

This time around, Sun's argument is not about the strengths and weaknesses of the mainframe as a server but, as Sun contends loudly, about IBM continuing to charge too much to run basic transaction processing applications (specifically for the COBOL with CICS environment using VSAM/DB2). **Sun believes that it has a viable alternative that is less costly – sometimes 50-70% less – than what many G4/G5 and Multiprise customers are now paying.**¹

Using technology and resources that it acquired earlier this year, Sun has the assessment process, software, and services to rehost mission-critical mainframe applications on its midrange or larger Unix platforms. Sun is also offering trade-in allowances (with an extra allowance for older mainframes), financing buy-out options, and training discounts. **More importantly, Sun is about to pay a lot of attention to these low-end mainframe customers, as part of a recently-announced marketing initiative under Sun's *Project Blue Away* banner.**²

So if you run or lease time on a mainframe that is dominated by a 100-1000 MIPS of COBOL/CICS/VSAM/DB2 application workload, Sun's foray is a call to action. Weigh the pros and cons carefully (including the ROI and risk assessments), while both Sun and IBM (and their partners) try to convince you that theirs is the better way for your enterprise, in the short term and into the future. **Enjoy the attention while it lasts, and use this as an opportunity to assess where you are and where you want to be.**



¹ We will be taking a closer look at this claim.

² Sun's first used *Project Blue Away* to target stranded *NUMA-Q* customers.

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Ms. MacFarland specializes in strategic solutions offered by enterprise systems and storage vendors, in trends in enterprise systems and networks, and in explaining these trends and the underlying technologies in simple business terms. She joined The Clipper Group after a long career in library systems, business archives, consulting, research, and freelance writing. Ms. MacFarland earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University, where she was a College Scholar, and a Masters of Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University.

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