NetXen Serves the Future to You — Today

Analyst: Anne MacFarland

For many markets, prosperity has returned, but the habits of constraint persist. Many of us are stuck in *I wish I could, but...* mode. Well, this is a Paul Revere-style wake-up call to start thinking about *what should be done when data transfer is easy*. 10 GbE is not only real, but it is now available with volume pricing. It is affordable. It will be available on servers from IBM and HP.

The company behind this great good news is NetXen, a low-profile company, based in Santa Clara, CA, whose focus is on the semiconductor space and whose vision is of a more agile datacenter. It offers, not only the fat pipe of 10 GbE in the form of an intelligent NIC, board, or dual-ported blade solution, but also the intelligence layered into the chip to let the hardware and software add more capabilities for particular situations or industries along with the built-in agility to let those capabilities evolve, going forward. Because NetXen products accelerate multiple protocols, including TCP/IP, RDMA, iSCSI/iSER, they can make 10GbE work very effectively in an enterprise environment. Because NetXen manages not just the 10 Gigabit Ethernet pipe as a whole, but the optimization of the different protocols that run through it, management is not merely a matter of contention avoidance, but of active prioritization of processes to best support the business.

Additionally, the change goes farther. Because NetXen supports virtualization, its products can support the server consolidation you have done and give you the capability to take it farther. With virtualization, a blade can support several applications (think dual processors, each multi-core), which will demand a fatter pipe. NetXen also supports security, in firmware, in the server environment. This lets you use end-point security to think about your networking differently. Because NetXen products also support Gigabit Ethernet and Quad Gigabit Ethernet, the change can be introduced[1] as an evolution. Furthermore, NetXen products use very little power (10 watts or so) and are of a small form factor that can fit in a 1U server or blade. NetXen's blade solution is dual 10 GbE ported for load balancing and failover, and obviates the need for an overly expensive 10 GbE backplane. Thus, NetXen's 10 Gigabit Ethernet will help keep the cost of blades reasonable.

It is time to take out your drawing board and rethink how you can do things. How many of your processes, constrained by bandwidth or bulk, could use a rethink? Where could you add a push of video to seal a deal or to assist the efficiency of knowledge transfer? What information would you reposition if its bulk were not a problem? Think about the potential of a server environment that is not tiered between the cheap-but-weak and the potent-but-expensive. If you could characterize your server capabilities to fit your needs, by offloads and accelerants, and inherent security, what would you do? How would your planning change if you had blades and servers equipped with the intelligence to support the "specialities du jour" that give your business its differentiation, and the reprogrammability to support the changes you needed to those specialties over time?

In Boston, we celebrate Paul Revere's ride, not just with re-enactments of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, but also with a marathon. The television crews capture the experience of the world-class runners and wheelchair athletes who are the leaders, but just as impressive are the thousands of less athletic folk, in all shapes and sizes, who complete the marathon as their own personal or community challenge. As the afternoon wears on, the rugged persistence of the slower runners is, in a different way, just as extraordinary as the strength of those who see the marathon as a matter of time. Like the marathon, this new volume-priced 10 Gigabit Ethernet capability is not just for large businesses, or those specializing in data transmission, such as IPTV. Every business has its own challenges to meet, and many of them can be addressed more effectively by the *doing things differently* that is supported by better bandwidth. If your business is facing a daunting marathon of competitive threats, think of where the acceleration of NetXen's 10 Gigabit Ethernet capabilities can help you.

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[1] In the second half of 2006, NetXen will be introduced on storage arrays.

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