



Delivering New Linux Applications

Chiphopper offering helps ISVs port Linux applications beyond x86 hardware

BY EVELYN HOOVER

People want choices when they purchase goods and services. Imagine what it would be like if your supermarket's produce section offered apples, but not oranges. In the world of computer software, choices abound and the list of choices available on IBM® @server hardware is growing, thanks in part to the Chiphopper® offering.

Formally known as IBM @server Application Advantage* for Linux, Chiphopper has resulted in more than 130 new applications being ported to the IBM System p5*, IBM @server p5, IBM @server i5, OpenPower*, BladeCenter* JS20, pSeries*, iSeries*, System z9* and zSeries* systems (or a combination thereof). Chiphopper was announced at LinuxWorld in February 2005, with enhancements unveiled at the August LinuxWorld conference. According to IBM, the offering is the IT industry's first combination of support and testing tools designed to deliver on the promise of a cross-platform Linux solution for ISVs.

What is Chiphopper

Just what is Chiphopper and how does it help deliver on its promise? An initiative developed in collaboration with Novell and Red Hat, Chiphopper allows ISVs worldwide to enable their Linux applications to operate across the IBM eServer product line, from entry-level x86-based servers, blades and clusters to POWER* technology-based servers to TotalStorage* solutions to Linux on the mainframe.

Ready for IBM @server with Linux What the mark stands for:



• Represents:

IBM Business Partner ISV Linux applications that are ported to run on POWER processor-based or zSeries systems and which are participating in an IBM portability validation and assurance of support offering. The mark is platform dependent and applies only for a specified time.

• Value to End User Customers:

Mark assures clients that IBM stands behind Linux ISVs which gives peace of mind to clients considering using solutions from smaller, less well known ISVs, and gives the client more choices of platform than x86. It also provides more robust solutions on Linux by encouraging ISVs to move to IBM's middle-ware on Linux.

• Value to ISV:

This mark can enable ISVs to leverage IBM eServer brand equity, and Linux market momentum. Using this mark, Business Partners can differentiate their products and broaden their audience reach. The mark may also yield the ISV and their applications greater customer interest and consideration through the added assurance of assistance in case of any cross-platform customer problems with the ported applications.

The no-charge Chiphopper offering—the name is derived from its capability to allow ISV applications to easily move, or “hop,” across various kinds of chips—allows ISVs to easily test, port and support their existing Linux-on-x86 (Intel* or AMD) applications across POWER and zSeries systems.

ISVs can also take advantage of free access to the various hardware platforms to which their products can be ported. This type of access is particularly appealing to the smaller ISVs.

“It would have been too expensive for a small company to test its products on all of the IBM platforms,” explains Vienna, Austria-based Markus Mayer. “Besides the cost of the hardware—zSeries, iSeries, et cetera—it would take a lot of administration effort to keep all of these machines going and on current versions.”

Mayer is principal and producer of Aly printstream anALYzer. As a result of the Chiphopper offering, the Vienna, Austria-based company has been able to port its product to IBM @server xSeries*, zSeries and all Linux on POWER processor-based servers.

Another Chiphopper user is TeamQuest Corp. Even though it had previously ported solutions to Linux, the company still turned to Chiphopper to port four of its products—TeamQuest View, TeamQuest On the Web, TeamQuest Alert and TeamQuest Model—to iSeries, pSeries and zSeries systems. “The Chiphopper offering made it easier to gain access to Linux systems through the different platforms available at the portation center,” explains Joe Rich, director of strategic relationships for the Clear Lake, Iowa-based ISV.

In addition to helping ISVs, the customer also wins with Chiphopper. According to IBM's Kay Tate, technical lead on the Chiphopper offering, “The customer has more opportunity and can afford to rely on perhaps smaller ISVs than they might have considered or they can consider using Linux solutions earlier because there are more to choose from.

“Some of these smaller leading-edge ISVs might have an interesting application but a larger commercial customer might have hesitated to talk to them. Now IBM is standing behind them in a very visible way,” she explains. That visible way Tate refers to is the square blue mark that identifies Chiphopper applications with the words, “Ready for IBM @server with Linux.” The sidebar (left) summarizes other customer benefits.

The aforementioned mark means that IBM, Novell and Red Hat provide support to the ISV should a problem arise with its application when running at a customer site. This support is important to ISVs, according to Mayer. “They will work with me to solve any porting-related hardware or operating system issue that might arise in the future on an unforeseen hardware/operating system/software combination installed at customer sites,” he adds.

The mark is also a sign of assurance for customers. It tells them that the ISV has gone through a technical validation and testing program and teamed with IBM to help ensure that the application works with standards—Linux standards for C and C++ or Java standards. By adhering to standards, the application is inherently more stable, according to Tate.

“So it’s more apps, more choices, more potential for cutting-edge function,” Tate summarizes.

Teri Austin, Linux ISV recruitment manager, Developer Relations, IBM, adds, “The cost and the risk of supporting the application on additional server platforms are removed. In theory, the lower barrier of entry enables more ISVs to bring more applications to the market on the customer’s server of choice.”

Another x86-based ISV, Qtech Business Systems Pty Ltd, took advantage of the Chiphopper offering to port its Lifecycle Plus product to all POWER5* platforms. Ricky B. McGowan, CEO of Brisbane, Australia-based Qtech, says that although porting to non-x86 platforms would have been possible without Chiphopper, it wouldn’t have happened.

“Access to required skills and hardware platforms are critical and without the Chiphopper program it would have simply been too difficult, too resource-intensive and too expensive to ever justify,” he explains.

Chiphopper Phase Two

To help deliver additional applications via the Chiphopper offering, IBM announced several enhancements to the program at the August 2005 LinuxWorld Conference in San Francisco. “The concepts involved in the latest Chiphopper offering are different from what we have been able to offer before,” Tate explains. “We needed to start from core design and coverage. We started with ISVs who had 32-bit x86 applications using a limited set of IBM software products. As we work with ISVs and see that they need additional products supported by the offering, we expand the offering.”

IBM increased the middleware that’s covered by the program to include DB2* 8.2, WebSphere* Application Server 6.0, WebSphere Portal 5.6 and the Express version of DB2 and WebSphere Application Server.

There’s also expanded support for third-party middleware. Seven third-party middleware packages were initially supported at Chiphopper’s inception. Now there are 10 more. The Chiphopper Web site (www.developer.ibm.com/isv/eserver/advantage) offers a complete list. “As soon as we officially started the offering, we noted that there were some additional products that were commonly used by ISVs that wanted to take advantage of Chiphopper. As soon as we could expand the offering for the most popular products, we did. This is our Phase 2 offering, which is now available worldwide,” Tate says.



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- Kay Tate

In addition, it’s now easier for ISVs to enroll in Chiphopper. IBM has pared down what was a three-step enrollment process; now ISVs only need to fill out a single, shorter form and they’re off and running, according to Tate.

Expanding the Portfolio

The Chiphopper offering is about expanding the portfolio of commercial Linux applications and solutions. To that end, it’s met IBM’s initial goal as explained by Scott Handy, vice president, worldwide Linux, when the program was announced: “Linux on x86 is already huge, and the Chiphopper offering will not only increase that market opportunity, but also expand it to additional platforms than what was possible.”



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