

IBM Shows Future of Grid Computing

IBM's new grid offerings will help enterprises improve research, analysis and IT operations. Enterprises should see this announcement as part of the evolution of grid computing toward packaged products.

Event: On 27 January 2003, IBM announced 10 grid computing offerings, targeted initially at the financial services, life sciences, automotive, aerospace and government sectors.

First Take: Grid computing dynamically allocates computing power from a pool of processor and storage resources — especially useful for highly parallel workloads. IBM's grid offerings extend beyond the traditional grid applications in R&D and business analytics to include optimizing enterprise infrastructure. IBM will sell these offerings as products or as services. IBM stated that it will make more grid announcements in 2003. It hinted the upcoming announcements will take grid computing beyond high-performance computing applications to transaction-oriented applications and that grid computing will support its e-business, on-demand and utility-service offerings.

IBM's 10 initial grid offerings focus on five areas, which will each have innovation workshops and modules:

- R&D
- Engineering and design
- Business analytics
- Enterprise optimization
- Government development

Specific offerings include:

- Data access for life sciences and government
- Faster analytics for finance markets and life sciences
- Engineering and data access for automotive and aerospace
- IT optimization for finance markets

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Options among the basic components for IBM's grid offerings include Tivoli, Avaki, Globus Toolkit, IBM DB2EEE, Discovery Link, IBM pSeries and xSeries, and Platform Computing. In addition to Avaki and Platform Computing, IBM's grid computing partners include DataSynapse, Entropia and United Devices.

Enterprises should see this announcement as an evolution of grid computing, which is moving away from just custom engagements and toward possibly higher-volume packaged offerings. IBM and other vendors continue to learn about market requirements and technology capabilities for grid computing. As they have gained experience, the concept has become useful in specific application areas (especially for highly parallel, processor-intensive workloads). As grid computing standards evolve and experience grows, enterprises can expect a growing number of packaged grid computing offerings to be available for in-house deployment. Increasingly, these offerings will take the form of vendor-supported utility services.

Analytical Sources: Thomas Bittman and Bruce Caldwell, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- “Will Grid Computing Create New Service Provider Opportunities?” — Grid computing envisions a computing environment akin to the national power grid, where multiple regional generating resources can be tapped as needed and users pay according to how much power they consume. **By Tony Adams and Adam Couture**
- “Grid Delivery Surfaces in Enterprises: A Tutorial” — Enterprises should start with carefully controlled trials of grid delivery technology and should validate scalability and performance before deploying it enterprisewide. **By Lawrence Orans**

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