

HP's Adaptive Infrastructure Head Duncan Campbell Discusses Data Center Efficiency and Energy Conservation Best Practices

Transcript of BriefingsDirect podcast recorded at the Hewlett-Packard Software Universe Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada the week of June 16, 2008.

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Dana Gardner: Hi, this is Dana Gardner, principal analyst at Interarbor Solutions, and you're listening to a special BriefingsDirect podcast recorded live at the Hewlett-Packard Software Universe Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. We are here in the week of June 16, 2008. This sponsored HP Software Universe live podcast is distributed by BriefingsDirect Network.

We are joined now by Duncan Campbell, the vice president in-charge of the Adaptive Infrastructure program at HP. Welcome to show, Duncan.

Duncan Campbell: Great. My pleasure to be here, Dana.

Gardner: You know, a lot has been said about data centers and how they are shifting, how people are trying to bring in more capability at higher scale to deal with more complexity, and, of course, cut costs and even labor resources. That is to say, automate whenever possible. Tell us a little bit about how you characterize or describe the data center situation and the challenges the companies are facing right now.

Campbell: It will be my pleasure. In fact, Dana, what we're seeing is almost a perfect storm happening here in the data center right now, and the next generation data center is, in fact, a hot topic. It's a hot topic not just because we're here in Las Vegas and it's 102 degrees, but, in fact, the fundamental design center of the data center is being challenged right now and it's really under siege by a number of different factors.

One of the things you talked about is cost, and another one of the things is energy efficiency. Another key element that we are seeing at this point really has to do with the fundamental challenge that customers who are striving more-and-more to deal with automation have less time. We have an excellent opportunity here to have conversations with customers and partners of Software Universe about the adaptive infrastructure, which is HP's program for the next generation data center.

Gardner: What is different from this next generation data center, the one that we are working with, working toward even, and what was described as a very modern up-to-date data center five years ago?

Campbell: Good question. Fundamentally, what HP has is a strategy that allows our IT managers to be much more engaged with lines of business, because we are allowing IT, at this point, really to participate in a dialogue to be much more engaged with lines of business, as it relates to how IT can be fundamentally thought more as not just a cost-type of agenda,

but in fact be more fundamental to driving the business.

That being the case, Dana, we have six fundamental technology enablers that we work with customers to select from to design their next generation data center, and these six technologies are really critical. One has to do with the type of systems they choose, and more and more it's becoming a reality where they are becoming more dense. These systems are drawing more power, so we need to work with customers on how best to design those solutions.

Second, are key enablers around energy-efficiency type of technologies. The third is around virtualization. The fourth is around management, and then we also have security, and finally automation. These are some of the key technologies that are part of the adaptive infrastructure.

Gardner: Now, it seems that the architects and the decision-makers, the specifiers in the operations units of large organizations, have their hands full these days, and, as you've mentioned, have energy issues to contend with. They are also dealing with consolidation in many cases and legacy modernization, bringing more of a services orientation to their applications for purposes of reuse and governance and extending across multiple business processes, assets and resources. So, in an efficiency drive it seems that there is a notion of having to fly the airplane and change the wings at the same time.

I also hear from a lot of enterprises concerned that manual processes are not scaling. When it comes to test, a bug, change management, issues around performance management, making a printout and sticking up on the wall and finding the time-stamps for incidents and uncovering the root causes that way is not scaling. How does HP come in with products and services to help companies manage these multiple major trends that are impacting them?

Campbell: Well, I think you did nail some of the key needs. So, we would agree entirely. It's not just about a rip-and-replace strategy. It is dealing with those core issues that you spoke of, both in terms of cost, energy, and some other elements around quality of service to be more aligned with the line of business and then speed.

So, to your point about how to get started, most customers understand the basic value proposition around the adaptive infrastructure, which is about this 24/7 lights-out computing environment. It's based on modular building blocks, using very off-the-shelf software and comprehensive services.

One thing that we do that is unique. We provide specific assessment services for our customers, and this is not just about product. It's really more understanding their needs, where they set the baseline of their specific needs by business. And, it's not just about technology. It's about their governance management and organizational type of needs. Then, we design specific recommendations on how to proceed, given their specific environment.

Gardner: Because we're at a user conference and a technology forum, I am assuming that there is some news to be had here, or perhaps you can share some of that with us. Something about blade servers, I believe it was.

Campbell: Exactly, and so I hope you are holding onto your hat there. One of the things about the adaptive infrastructure, people are always looking for proof points. They say, "Yeah, great strategy. I understand the value proposition, Duncan, but it's all about the proof points in making it real."

Last year, we had both our blade systems, which was really it's an adaptive infrastructure in a box. It includes virtualization. It includes blade storage and servers and management capabilities.

One of the areas that people fundamentally love, which was rock-solid business and high availability, were our non-stop servers, and they say, "Are you just abandoning that?" No, the news that we are offering here is that we're going to now have brand new bladed non-stop systems that are going to be a fundamental proof point of our adaptive infrastructure.

We're bringing some of those high-availability features people love, but in more of this adaptive infrastructure type of environment. And it's one of the one thing our software customers love, because as you start to kick up service-oriented architecture (SOA) projects, specific business continuity projects, or strategy applications, you have to have adaptive infrastructure that provides that type of value to you.

Gardner: Let's return to the energy issue. I'm also seeing some news coming out of these events this week around dynamic smart cooling. That's a mouthful. What does it really mean?

Campbell: Good question. Dynamic smart cooling. The one thing that you should understand when we talk about energy-efficiency, is it's about not just the new technology, which is always improving, but some of the facilities type of capabilities we have. So, we have some fantastic new services from our EYP services, which HP acquired, that designs most of the new data centers on Planet Earth at this point. Among the new capabilities we have around the data center, the key one is dynamic smart cooling.

Barclays Bank, for example, recently adopted it across their whole company to save greater than 13 percent of their data-center cost. It manages the air flow in your facilities. So, in combination with services, plus this new technology that came from HP labs, plus the new servers and software elements, this is the type of winning combination customers demand and expect from HP.

Gardner: We are also, I believe, going to see some news later in the week around change management and problem management and resolution. I don't have the details, and we can't pre-announce that, but it does bring to mind the question about hardware/software services, these major trends, methodologies and maturity models, the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL).

For those folks managing multiple dimensions of IT operational integrity and efficiency, how do you get a handle on a holistic, top-down approach that includes elements of hardware, energy, software, change management, and IT systems management? Is there a whole greater than the sum of the parts here?

Campbell: We are finding that customers are demanding that holistic approach, which is why dealing with the company with the size and the depth and breadth of HP makes a lot of sense. Some of the software attributes that you've mentioned here at HP really do come to bear when you think about the adaptive infrastructure. Some of the fundamental building blocks from Opsware are great examples of that.

When you think about data-center automation, that is a great example, and Forrester recently called HP's Opsware product suite the number one offering out there. And that's in combination with, as I mentioned before, some of our maturity-model type of assessment that we do with our largest customers. It is a fantastic dialogue in assessment built on rich set of data best practices, where we understand where they are trying to go with their environment, and then work with them on specific recommendations. It's a fantastic process that we engage in with customers.

Gardner: I suppose an important aspect of going holistic is that people don't want iterative payback. They are looking for substantive efficiency and performance improvements. To that element, do you have some examples of companies or a matrix? What is the baseline? Are people looking for 15-20 percent that says "Yeah, I am ready to go holistic?" Is this more up towards 30-40 percent? What are the bottom line elements of what these customers are expecting from these kinds of major activities?

Campbell: Good question. We have a very robust solution called our Data Center Transformation Solution from HP, which is a composite of some concrete specific solutions with specific return-on-investment type of numbers in the range you mentioned for energy-efficiency IT consolidation, and business continuity in data center automation.

As you are saying, though, lots of customers don't have the time or the runway to expect a long-term project with a speculative type of payback. What we do is break it into bite-size chunks, into fundamental progress, with return-on-investment in these concrete solution areas.

Gardner: Let's look to the future a little bit. We are hearing a lot these days about cloud computing. Many people think of that as a greater utility function that someone else does, but for some of the enterprises that I speak to, they actually like the idea of private clouds -- taking the best of the technology and efficiencies at a cloud computing approach.

I believe it is taking the methodology and approach, as well as the technology set, and using that to support their services, their data, and perhaps start doing more platform as a service, integration as service activities, but for their internal constituencies, and then, over time, into their partners and business ecologies. What do you see coming from an adaptive solutions perspective for cloud computing?

Campbell: From my standpoint, I think you've nailed it, because we do not see our major enterprise customers turning over lock, stock, and barrel, their whole IT environment to a perhaps less insecure type of environment with less predictive type of results.

What we see, though, is that customers like attributes of the cloud. So, the private cloud concept that you speak of here is much more near-and-dear to the heart as we've heard from some of our advisory type of customers and our lighthouse customers. From that standpoint they are looking very much to an adaptive infrastructure to provide those type of attributes of a cloud, but still under the control and under the security type of requirements that they have for their specific enterprise and their domains.

Gardner: So, when we think of the next next-generation data center architectures and the requirements for them, do you think cloud computing is going to play a significant role in that?

Campbell: That's the hot topic, and it's interesting, because of these specific benefits that we provide with the adaptive infrastructure around speed, cost, quality of service, and energy. It turns out those value propositions still remain true. So, we see this as more of an opportunity for us to provide new technology innovation for our customers through some of the attributes of the cloud. There are a lot of people working on this within HP, but I think it's providing customer choice, while providing no specific benefits in the next generation data center, and that is exactly our plan.

Gardner: Very good, and just to close out our discussion, you announced today the non-stop blade servers. When will those be available in the market?

Campbell: At this point, that news is being transmitted as we speak, and so as our press release comes across the wire we will all know that, and read that with great relish and anticipation.

Gardner: Okay, we could fill that in a little later in a future podcast. But, thank you. We've been speaking with Duncan Campbell. He is the vice president in charge of Adaptive Infrastructure and the Adaptive Infrastructure Program here at Hewlett-Packard. Also, you're delivering, I believe, some keynotes and other discussions at the live event throughout the week.

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I'm Dana Gardner, principal analyst at Interarbor Solutions. Thanks for listening, and come back next time for more in-depth podcasts on enterprise software infrastructure and strategies. Bye for now.

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