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Sector7 Salivating to Migrate HP 3000 Users to iSeries

by Alex Woodie

The thought of 30,000 [Hewlett-Packard](#) HP 3000 customers forced to move off the platform has the folks over at [Sector7](#) absolutely giddy with delight. Sector 7, an Austin, Texas, company that specializes in migrating applications and data to [IBM's](#) eServer lineup, is looking to do business with a good chunk of that HP installed base and, from the sound of it, wants to move them to the IBM platform that could provide them with the most comfort and security: the iSeries.

HP 3000 users are "unbelievably excited" about the prospect of moving to the iSeries, says Jon Power, chief executive of Sector 7. Power says he has fielded calls from several prominent HP 3000 users and ISVs who write applications for its MPE/ix operating system, inquiring about the iSeries. "They specifically said to me--twenty of them, gurus and ISVs--'We will pay our own fare to come to an iSeries briefing.' I was quite shocked."

There is no dying need to rush off the HP 3000 at this point in time, although it would behoove IT managers at HP 3000 shops to at least start listing the migration options available to them. [HP announced](#) last November what many had suspected for some time: that the 30-year-old server line's days were numbered. HP will support the MPE/ix operating system until 2006 and will cease offering processor upgrades by October 2003.

HP's strategy is to move HP 3000 users to its own Unix operating system, HP-UX, on its HP 9000 and rp Series Unix servers, running on its own PA-RISC processors or on [Intel's](#) 64-bit Itaniums or on Windows or Linux servers using 32-bit or 64-bit Intel chips. However, HP already has plans to sunset its PA-RISC lineup in favor of 64-bit Intel Itanium processors, which it is co-developing with Intel. While the latest HP-UX servers that HP is shipping are ready to have Itanium

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processors plugged into them when Itanium is finally ready, some HP 3000 customers are not too happy about HP's processor roadmap and the reliance it puts on unproven technology.

Not surprisingly, IBM is swinging into the foray and hoping to scoop up some disgruntled HP 3000 customers, who had developed a loyalty to their platform that is not unlike that associated with AS/400 and iSeries customers.

There are many similarities between the HP 3000 line and the iSeries, and several good reasons why HP 3000 customers should at least consider the iSeries as a migration option. Both servers date their roots to the dawn of the minicomputer age, in the early 1970s, and have gained strong footholds in the manufacturing, retail, healthcare, and financial services industries. Both lines are integrated, proprietary systems designed to run business applications in small and midsize shops, and both are relatively stable machines that require a minimum of upkeep and personnel to maintain.

While hard numbers are difficult to come by, it would seem that the majority of HP 3000 applications have been written in COBOL, although there is a smattering of Fortran, 4GLs, and even some RPG running on HP 3000 servers. It is these COBOL applications that Sector7 will have the greatest success with in moving to the OS/400 platform; the Fortran applications, used more heavily in applications that do a lot of number crunching such as banking applications, are better suited to the pSeries, Power says.

IBM has already committed to offering free migration assessments to potential users thinking about moving from HP 3000 to IBM's eServers. When one of these assessments is completed, the user will have a good idea of the time it will take to move the applications and data, the risks involved, and how much it will cost. Power says these assessments, which will be performed by Sector7 and paid for by IBM, would normally cost up to \$100,000.

Sector7 has developed a translation tool that prepares HP 3000 COBOL source code for the ILE COBOL compiler for OS/400. Power says this tool was originally developed to move MPE/ix COBOL to AIX, IBM's Unix variant, but that it was a logical jump to apply it to OS/400 as well. Sector7 has another tool that moves data from HP 3000 servers to IBM's DB2 database.

There are no hard and fast rules dictating how long it takes to migrate data and apps, or how much it could cost. As a rule of thumb, it shouldn't take more than six months to migrate a single application and test to ensure it works, and would cost somewhere in the range of several tens of thousands of dollars. Obviously, it will take longer to port applications that have been heavily customized, or applications that are continually being changed during the porting process, Power says.

When HP 3000 customers do decide to invest in OS/400 and iSeries applications, they will most likely be greeted with a series of discounted offerings from IBM. Big Blue is currently developing an HP 3000-to- iSeries migration marketing plan and should be ready to announce the details by mid-March, says Tamra Veldhuizem, worldwide marketing manager for iSeries.

Sector7 has experience porting applications that run on a variety of legacy operating systems to Windows and Unix, and is also familiar with providing end-to-end migration services. However, it is by no means the only option available to HP 3000 customers and ISVs who code in COBOL. Several vendors have recently announced COBOL compilers for iSeries and mainframe Linux. For example, [Micro Focus](#), an established provider of development tools for COBOL, last week announced a COBOL compiler for Linux running on IBM's zSeries mainframe. In January, [Acucorp](#) released a version of its COBOL development environment designed to allow COBOL applications to run on the iSeries flavor of Linux.

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