

Saturday, January 27, 2007

Welcome to the game

While reading Scientias good article about AMD Q4 earnings, i thought a little bit about the situation in the x86 market:

AMD touts the quad core K8L, Intel speaks about the 45 nm Core Duo, both tells the world that they are faster than the other. And both is correct for certain timeframes. Sounds familar. Yeah, it's leapfrogging. When two architectures are rather similar (UltraSPARC and Power, AMD x64 or Intel x64) then the companies starts to play technical leapfrogging. At one point of time you lead the competition, at an different point of time it's the competition.

To escape out of the game you must make such an large jump, that can prepare the next jump completely before the competition has catched up. In marketing droid speak this is called "disruptive technology". I tend to think, that Niagara is such an example. The compeition is still not capable to put such an amount of capacity in one socket (they've catched up with dual-sockets), while we prepare the launch of Niagara II systems with a jump at least as large as the jump from normal UltraSPARC to Niagara before, and heck ... i've heard extremely good news yesterday about the follow-on jump (No, i'm still not authorized to be a leak)

The problem with Intel and AMD is: They play the game in a more extreme style. They are compatible to each other and so the user base is much more volatile. The users in the customer market goes to the vendor that gives them the most bang (or to name it more precise: where the press and the internet made them believe to get more bang) for their buck. There is no barrier like incompatiblility of the architectures or operating guidlilines that works only for an operating system that is only available for one of the architecture. There is no AIX for Sparc (Thank goodness) ... hey ... there is an Solaris for PowerPC. But not for the Power4/5-class systems.

So neither AMD nor Intel can hold the benchmark leadership for a long time, K8 was leapfrogged by Core2, Core2 will be leapfrogged by K8L.

Dear AMD and not to dear Intel ("Hey, the deal is only a few days old and you forgotten to name Solaris on you 45nm press conference"): Welcome to the game of leap frogging!

PS: I hope that AMD will never use "K9" as an designator for the processor architecture. To much wordgames in reach ... as "dog slow" ...

Posted by Joerg Moellenkamp in English, The IT Business at 07:38