Saturday, June 27. 2009

With friends like this ...

... you don´t need enemies. Sun has a good working relationship with Intel. Thus i would expect better articles like this one at the Server Room Blog. While i understand that a Intel guy wants to pitch the processors of his employer, i don´t understand why he talks about Solaris and AIX, when he really wants to say SPARC and Power. Okay, Power and AIX are dependent from each other.

But you can run Solaris at x86 as well and it runs especially well on Nehalem based systems. Ken Lloyd does the mistake of many people by thinking about Solaris: Thinking about SPARC when thinking about Solaris and connecting Linux with x86. When your cost structure mandates x86 your could easily use Solaris as well.

It´s the same RedHat tries to tell you: Obviously Linux on a brand new Xeon is cheaper when you compare with Solaris on an old E250 Server.

Ken writes: It is reasonable to say Xeon can deliver better performance, better value, and equal or better reliabilityI would like to answer to this quote with a quote of Jonathan Heiliger, the vice president of technical operations for Facebook: The biggest thing ? was less-than-anticipated performance gains from new microarchitectures, so new CPUs from guys like Intel and AMD. The performance gains they're touting in the press, we're not seeing in our applications," Heiliger told the audience.As the GHz race has ceased and the Intel/AMD fraction goes into multicores as well, they run in pretty much the same problem as Sun since 2005. Not every customers application is multicore friendly. And by the way:The Nehalem just got in the same range of per socket performance like the UltraSPARC T2 processor, a processor that hit the market in 2007. Does Ken really thinks that we don´t develop a successor to UltraSPARC T2? When you look at performance of SPARC just look at the SPARC64 VIIIfx.

10 GBit/s or crypto acceleration on die has to be seen on Intel procs ... so much to the "value" moniker. And Xeon is nowhere near to UltraSPARC T or even SPARC64 VII in term of reliability.

By the way: I find this reliability discussion on CPU basis really funny. Reliability is a systemic property, not a component property. Even the best CPU is helpless, when the system around it doesn´t hold to the standards of the CPU. A CPU can´t work in a reliable way, when you just put the cheapest memory from the spot market into the system.

The mentioned Machine Check Architecture architecture mentioned in the blog entry is just a reporting system of errors (something SPARC, Power and all the other RISC architectures do since the last century). It needs the OS to react on the error. So the dismissal of Solaris is really strange,too: Linux doesn´t have something like the Fault Management Architecture of Solaris, but you need exactly something like the FMA to take advantage of MCA.

Ken, the managers you mention as those negelecting the business aren´t idiots. They just don´t believe everything Intel, the Linux business and the media tries to implant in their mind without questioning everything. At last your article is just a good example for marketing piece trying to pitch the products of your employer by repeating the same stuff again and again. But that doesn´t make it true.

Posted by Joerg Moellenkamp in English, Oracle, Solaris, The IT Business at 08:56

And what about Rock?
   Anonymous on Jun 27 2009, 10:14

To add to your point about the need of a reliable OS to get it right, that why Intel does love Solaris/OpenSolaris for their Nehalem platform... Unfortunatly it seems that Ken Lloyd is not connected to his own engineering BU... Just have a look here about OpenSolaris on Nehalem from David Stewart, Software Engineering Manager d'Intel :
http://blogs.sun.com/EricBezille/entry/opensolaris_et_intel_xeon_processor
   Anonymous on Jun 27 2009, 10:18

Indeed - that was an embarrassingly bad blog entry from Ken Lloyd. Amazing how completely out of touch so-called "experts" can be!
   Anonymous on Jun 27 2009, 13:41