

FlashPaper news so hot it might ignite

HP made MPE beta test opportunities easier to find. HP is introducing a new section on its Jazz Web site which lists available MPE/iX beta test patches. The site lists all available BT patches for releases 6.5, 7.0, and 7.5, and is updated daily. The section at jazz.external.hp.com/src/patches identifies the patches, which have been tested inside HP, at a minimum, but are not yet ready for General Release (GR). HP will not move patches from beta test to GR status until they have been tested at one or more customer sites. Patches available for public downloads from the HP IT Resource Center, for example, are GR patches.

The Jazz listings don't provide customers any links to download the beta test software. HP's procedures require that customers be on HP support to receive beta test patches, in part to provide a means to report on the testings.

HP said it developed the Web site in response to discussions held at the HP World 2004 SIGMPE meeting. "By publishing the list of BT patches, we hope customers will volunteer to become a Beta Test site for one or more patches," said HP's Jeff Vance. HP 3000 customers have become reluctant to beta test MPE patches, hoping to keep changes to their systems to a minimum and ensure reliability.

Merger season continues with WRQ's latest Attach-ment. The company that's placed its connectivity products on six million desks, including HP 3000 users', has extended its reach with another merger. WRQ's new owners, Golden Gate Capital, Francisco Partners and Thomas Cressey Equity Partners, have purchased WRQ rival Attachmate. When the transaction completes at the end of May, Attachmate will merge with WRQ.

Attachmate made some attempts at offering an HP 3000 connectivity solution in KEA! during the 1990s, but its primary marketplace has always been among IBM customers. A note alerting journalists to the merger pointed out that the combined company will have a 16 percent market share in host connectivity solutions, "second only to IBM." WRQ has built up its IBM-based solutions before branching out into development tools prior to its purchase in December, 2004.



FIRSTLOOK

Any merger that involves a company purchasing a rival can spark concerns among customers. Attachmate's press release called WRQ "Attachmate's cross-town competitor." Both firms do business in the Seattle area, where the combined company will remain. So customers, like those in the recent deal between Adobe and Macromedia, usually worry "will my product be dropped?" WRQ moved to quell some concerns with an April 18 letter from Shaun Wolfe, the CEO who took over for WRQ founder Doug Walker in January.

"Whether you are an Attachmate or WRQ customer, or a customer of both, your choice of product, maintenance support, and services is safe," Wolfe wrote. "And our future direction will be determined by continuing to listen to our customers." Even though the companies offer overlapping products, the near future won't hold any changes, Wolfe's letter added.

"Until the merger is complete in the next 45 days or so, Attachmate and WRQ will continue to operate as separate companies. None of our contractual agreements or contract details, including support or product licensing arrangements, will change."

Some changes are already in play at WRQ, however. The company announced that WRQ CEO Wolfe will take a position in the combined company as Senior Vice President of Products and Marketing. Jeff Hawn, named WRQ chairman after Walker retired, will become chairman and CEO of the combined company. Hawn's prior experience includes BMC Software, where he was senior vice president of operations, and McKinsey & Company, where he was a partner.

Like Walker's departure in December, Attachmate's founder Frank Pritt will retire from his company when the acquisition is complete. Attachmate's description of itself notes the company was started in Pritt's living room in 1982. Attachmate bills itself as one of the largest privately-owned software companies. The combined firm will have revenues of more than \$200 million. WRQ, also privately-held, reported revenues at \$138 million in 1997.

Companies with significant HP 3000 assets have been prized of late. Ecometry's holding company mirrored this merger of emulation software rivals earlier this year, when the holding company purchased Blue Martini Software. Ecometry was purchased last December by a combination of insider stock and outside investment capital. Also set to close this month is another 3000-related acquisition, when Activant's \$114 million offer for Speedware is scheduled for regulators' approval.

Open source MPE/iX subsystems are already available. Some parts of the HP 3000's operating system modules are based on open source projects - and one HP engineer suggested that makes that part of MPE already open-sourced. Mark Bixby, who ported the Apache Web server to the 3000 and manages Internet and interoperability projects for HP, told customers in a 3000 newsgroup that perl represents the face of OpenMPE.

“Still waiting for OpenMPE?” Bixby asked. “You already have it for these open source apps ported from Unix.” He went on to add that moving such programs along to newer versions is homesteaders' work, not HP's.

“It's not that difficult to update these open source apps yourselves if somebody else like me or Mark Klein or Lars Appel or whoever has already done the hard part by performing the initial port,” Bixby added. “Anybody who is going to be using these Unix open source apps on MPE beyond 12/31/06 seriously needs to become self-sufficient and develop the necessary porting skills to keep the apps fresh if you have a need to stay on the leading edge.”

Customers had asked HP, when it solicited ideas for a possible 2005 Systems Improvement Ballot, to update perl and make it a program that can be run instead of compiled and then executed. Bixby noted that perl 5.8.1 is available on the HP Invent public access development Web server, but perl has already moved forward to version 5.8.6.

“If I then proceeded to port 5.8.6 on HP time, then what? Newer versions of the source would still flow forth from perl.com, and you'd be back where you are today with 'old' Perl binaries for MPE,” Bixby said.

HP's new CEO sailed to his new company on a stock windfall. Mark Hurd might have been described as vanilla and the antithesis of his flashy predecessor, but the new HP CEO certainly sparkled in the investment game this spring. Government securities reports showed that Hurd sold a massive block of stock in NCR, the company he led as CEO, about six weeks before he took the HP job.

An Associated Press report quoted an HP spokesman as saying “there's no question whatsoever about the propriety of [Hurd's stock sales].” Hurd sold more than 145,000 shares of NCR stock in February and March. The first sale occurred in the week before HP CEO Carly Fiorina was ousted; the second took place March 2-3. HP said its recruiters contacted Hurd after the second sale.

The NCR stock sale earned Hurd \$2.3 million. NCR's shares fell 17 percent the day he announced he would take the HP CEO job and leave NCR. HP is protecting Hurd against declines in NCR stock under a provision in his employment agreement. HP will reimburse him for as much as 20 percent of the decline in the NCR stock price until June 30. He can exercise stock options covering 850,184 NCR shares and now holds 100,665 shares.

NCR's stock was still working to recover to its Hurd mark in mid-April, even after the company had tripled its profit estimates. In the meantime, HP's stock remained near \$20, about a dollar less than its value on the day HP ousted Fiorina.

Customers commemorate Fiorina duty with shirts and caps. Although HP's ousted CEO did not officially cancel the vendor's HP 3000 future, the high-profile Carly Fiorina did push the company further away from such high-profit, proprietary products. Now an online company has started selling clothing to let HP employees and customers celebrate the end of what some call the Carly Fiorina Years. Shopping at www.cafepress.com/carly_survivor yields clothing for those who emerged without changes to their employment, while www.cafepress.com/carly_victim caters to those no longer in the same job after her tenure.

Café Press is an online marketplace that offers sellers turnkey e-commerce services for apparel and other items, customized with logos. The Carly store also has a sense of humor; customers who order the Carly Victim beer stein can buy the mug for \$2 less than the Carly Survivor stein, “discounted here in deference to the unemployed.”

DON'T BUY NETMAIL/3000 — LEASE NETMAIL/3000

For as little as \$80.00* per month.

- Email data to/from applications
- Attach any type of MPE or Posix file
- Automatically convert HP3000 ASCII files to HTML or PDF

Get the details at

Email Leasenetmail@entrix.co.uk

Or phone 1 800 NETMAIL for full details.

*Based on half-yearly pre-payments of \$480.00