

Sun's Telecom Servers Get Opteron Makeover

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As the company looks to expand its product line, Sun will start shipping a Netra server that will use Advanced Micro Devices' dual-core processors.

Sun Microsystems, which has found itself on an upswing within the server market, is looking to expand its telecommunication offerings.

On March 27, Sun plans to roll out a new telecom server, the Netra x4200 M2. This new server will include Advanced Micro Devices' dual-core Opteron processors. Specifically, Sun will use a high-end embedded Opteron processor, the 2214HE, which runs at 2.2GHz and has a 68-watt thermal envelope.

In 2006, the Santa Clara, Calif., company began offering telecom servers, the Netra T2000 and the CP3060 ATCA (Advanced Telecom Computing Architecture), which use the company's UltraSPARC T1 chip, formerly code-named Niagara.

In 2003, Sun joined several other major OEMs in offering general-purpose systems that used the dual-core, 64-bit Opteron processor. Besides giving a boost to AMD, the announcement also showed the Sun wanted to expand its own lineup and give its customers additional choice.

Since then, Sun has begun offering additional AMD-based products, which allowed the company to compete with other mainstream, x86

technology. Then, on Jan. 22, the company announced that it had come to a new agreement with Intel after years of differences with the world's largest chip maker.

"The use of the AMD Opteron processor in this product line shows that we are really extending the choice of platforms in this particular line," said Baljeet Grewal, the senior product line manager for Sun's Netra Systems. "We want to offer a complete portfolio of choice, whether it's SPARC or AMD."

By using the embedded Opteron chip, Grewal said, Sun can also take advantage of AMD's five-year processor longevity standard, which assists OEMs and their developers with both pricing and processor stability.

As for the company's partnership with Intel, Grewal said she could not comment specifically on Sun's future plans, but she added that Intel-based products are included in the company's road map.

"We are not ready to announce a timeline just yet," Grewal said.

The 2U (3.5-inch) Netra X4200 M2 server offers four 146GB SAS hard drives and four on-board Ethernet ports. The system will also start using Sun's 10 Gigabit Ethernet Networking card later in 2007.

When Sun introduced its 10G Ethernet card earlier this year, company officials said it would start appearing in its hardware products throughout 2007.

The new server adheres to NEBS (Network Equipment-Building System) Level 3 certification. The NEBS standards are a key certification in the telecom industry, where servers are typically housed in physically harsh environments as opposed to a standard, climate-controlled data center.

On the Netra X4200, in addition to the company's own Solaris 10 operating system, Sun plans to support Microsoft Windows and Linux distributions from Red Hat and Novell.

Sun has started to ship a two-socket version of the Netra X4200 already, with a base price of \$9,845, according to the company. A single-socket version will ship in May at a price of \$6,145, according to Sun.

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