Dell Adds More Opterons to Its Server Lineup

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Dell is offering additional AMD Opteron processors in two new systems, the PowerEdge 2970 systems and the Energy Smart 2970, which the company said will help address power and cooling concerns.

Dell is about to make an even bigger bet on Advanced Micro Devices' Opteron processors.

Staring April 10, the Round Rock, Texas, PC maker will add several additional Opteron models to a new server offering called the PowerEdge 2970. In addition, Dell plans to add Opteron processors to a second new system, called the "Energy Smart" 2970 server, later this year.

For now, Dell will offer customers its PowerEdge 2970, a 2U (3.5-inch), two-socket system, with the option of several dual-core Opteron processor models with clock speeds ranging from 1.8GHz to chips that run at 3.0GHz, which AMD introduced on April 4.

After only offering Intel processors in its PCs and servers for years, Dell switched gears in 2006, announcing that it would offer AMD processors as well. On Oct. 23, the company unveiled two systems - the four-socket PowerEdge 6950 and the two-socket, 1U (1.75-inch) SC1435 - which promised to be the first of many AMD offerings.

By the end of 2006, Dell was offering several desktops and notebook with AMD processors as well.

Besides dual-core processors, Dell executives said the two systems have been designed to allow customers to upgrade to AMD's quad-core Opteron processor - "Barcelona" - when the chip maker unveils these models later in 2007.

Jay Parker, the director of Dell's PowerEdge Server group said that in addition to offering additional Opteron-based processors, the introduction of the two new systems is also a way for the company to address growing concerns about cooling and power costs within the data center.

"We hear a lot from customers about the need to address capacity and infrastructure constraints," Parker said. "Data centers have limited space and a lot of companies can't or won't make a capital investment. What Dell has been looking at are solutions that extend the life of the data center, that look at life-cycle costs, deployment and maintenance associated with servers."

What the 2970 series offers, Parker said, is greater energy efficiency, better architecture to support virtualization - the ability to run multiple applications and operating systems on a single server - and systems that can take advantage of the latest multicore processor technology.

Parker added that both systems will be the first of several high-volume servers that Dell will introduce to address concerns such as power and cooling. Later this year, he said the company would offer a "portfolio of products optimized for virtualization" and a new blade architecture.

In addition to touting AMD's Direct Connect Architecture, which is designed to improve memory and bandwidth by directly connecting memory and I/O to the CPU, Dell officials said the PowerEdge 2970 systems will also offer SAS (serial-attached SCSI) hard drives and a PCI Express I/O that will support Ethernet, RAID, InfiniBand and Fibre

Channel.

Dell also rolled out the PowerEdge Energy Smart 2970 on April 10, which the company claims will offer 25 percent greater performance per watt and reduce power consumption by 21 percent.

The company said it was able to offer a more energy-efficient server by offering a system that uses low-watt AMD processors, low-flow fan technology, more energy-efficient power supplies and BIOS, and other component specifications that increase power efficiency and air flow.

The PowerEdge 2970, which Dell said is immediately available, has a starting price of $1,849. Dell has not yet set a base price for the Energy Smart system but plans on making the systems widely available within a few weeks.

Roger Kay, president of Endpoint Technologies Associates in Wayland, Mass., said that Dell is sticking to its roadmap of offering AMD processors throughout its product line.

"This all has been driven primarily by customers asking the company for more choices," Kay said. "It's much more of the company responding to the feedback it had been getting from its customers. This is a response to that, although it is somewhat of a belated response."