XenSource Prepares Latest Virtualization Release

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The 3.2 version of the company's open-source-based software adds additional support for Windows Server 2003 and XP, along with iSCSI support.

XenSource, the company started by the original developers of the Xen open-source virtualization project, is gearing up for the release of the latest version of its XenEnterprise product.

After several months of beta testing, the Palo Alto, Calif., company will release the full version of XenEnterprise 3.2 on April 2.

Some of the most noticeable improvement to the 3.2 release revolves around the company's partnership with Microsoft. On July 18, 2006, the two companies announced a partnership that would provide interoperability between Xen-based Linux and Windows Server virtualization. XenSource went on to offer its first Windows product in December.

Although one of the more prominent of the virtualization providers, XenSource is not alone in developing open-source virtualization. On March 28, the OpenVX project, based in Herndon, Va., announced its latest operating system server virtualization software for the next stable Linux kernel - 2.2.60.

The latest version of XenEnterprise offers additional multiprocessor support for Windows 2003 and Windows XP guest, as well as new

support for Windows 2000 virtual servers, said Gordon Mangione, senior vice president of products for XenSource.

That additional Windows guest support, including support for Exchange, SQL Server and other applications, includes enhanced network performance, the ability to for the users to suspend or resume virtual machines within the environment, a maximum of 8GB of RAM for each Windows guest and drivers with WHQL (Windows Hardware Quality Laboratories) certification.

The software also supports up to four CPUs per Windows guest, Mangione said.

In addition, the virtualization product provides for iSCSI storage, which is an Internet protocol-based storage networking standard for linking data storage facilities. On March 5, Virtual Iron, which uses the open-source Xen hypervisor in its own virtualization product, announced that its latest technology would also support iSCSI.

"We really see iSCSI as an emerging technology and we can see it replacing a lot of SAN," Mangione said. "Right now, we're seeing a lot of use of iSCSI at the department level."

The other updates to the software include new manageability features and serviceability that will make the software and its deployment in the data center easier, Mangione said.

As with Virtual Iron, XenSource is also looking to deliver its product as a low-cost alternative to VMware, which owns the lion's share of the growing virtualization market.

In addition to a free, 30-day trial of XenEnterprise 3.2, the company is offering an annual subscription license for $488 per dual-socket server

and a $750 perpetual license per dual-socket server.

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