

IBM to Launch Power6-Based Systems in Six Weeks

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Big Blue executives said the Power6 microprocessor will hit the market in six weeks and will appear in its System p servers first.

IBM is planning to unveil the first systems that will use next-generation Power6 processors within the next six weeks.

At IBM's ParterWorld Conference in St. Louis, Ross Mauri, the general manager for System p in IBM's Systems and Technology group, told eWeek that Big Blue will be announcing new System p servers based on the Power6 processor in the next six weeks.

Currently, IBM's System p servers use its Power5+ processor.

"We're going to leapfrog the competitors again," Mauri said. "We're going to leave them in the dust."

The news that Power6 will arrive within the next two months is in line with the Armonk, N.Y., company's previous public statements that its new chip will be ready for a general lease in the second half of 2007. The company has also announced that it will build a supercomputer in Germany that also will use a Power6 processor.

While Mauri did not offer any additional details about Power6's configurations, IBM has been doling out configuration details of the new processor for several months, including the fact that the chips will more than double the frequency offered through Power5+ with a clock speed

ranging from 4GHz to 5GHz.

The Power6 chips will also be the first IBM processor built using the company's new 65-nanometer manufacturing process. By using the new manufacturing process, as opposed to the current 90-nanometer process, IBM is looking to double the frequency of its current processors but keep the instruction pipeline at the same depth.

This switch means IBM engineers will be able to crank up the speed without adding to the amount of time it will take for an instruction to get through a computation.

The processor also has been designed for power efficiency and the chip can be configured for high or low voltage, which will allow the platform to scale to the needs of the application that is running.

IBM executives have explained that designing flexibility into its microprocessor will allow the chips to run in large and small systems. This plan will allow IBM to have common processor architecture for its server lines, including Systems i, p and z.

An IBM spokesperson could not be reached for further comment about the company's plans to launch Power6 with Systems p servers.

Charles King, an analyst at Pund-IT Research in Hayward, Calif., said that IBM has been keeping details of the Power6 under wraps. Right now, King said many people are interested in the type of memory resources the System p systems will have to support the Power6 and how the new systems handle robust databases and complex financial transactions.

"Usually, IBM first offers something new in a mid-market offering," King said. "Then, over time, they will start offering both low-end and

high-end offerings."

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