Microsoft Cuts Core Features From Viridian

May 11 2007

The Windows Server virtualization technology will now not include Live migration and hot-add resources, and support will be limited to 16 cores or logical processors.

In an effort to meet its quality and shipping goals, Microsoft is cutting a number of core features from its upcoming Windows Server virtualization technology, code-named Viridian.

As a result, Viridian will not include Live migration, hot-add resources such as storage, networking, memory and processor, while support will be limited to 16 cores or logical processors.

Viridian is Microsoft's new hypervisor-based virtualization technology available as part of Windows Server Longhorn.

The Windows hypervisor is a thin software layer between the hardware and Windows Server Longhorn operating system, and allows multiple operating systems to run unmodified on a host computer at the same time. It provides partitioning functionality and is responsible for maintaining strong isolation between partitions.

"Earlier this week, we had to come to grips with some universal truths about product development: that shipping is also a feature and that the quality bar, the time you have and the feature set are directly correlated. Resources are also not infinite and, even if you could add more, it does not help get more done faster," Mike Neil, its general manager of virtualization strategy, said in a blog post May 10.

"So we had some really tough decisions to make. We adjusted the feature set of Windows Server virtualization so that we can deliver a compelling solution for core virtualization scenarios while holding true to desired timelines. Windows Server virtualization is a core operating system technology for the future, and we chose to focus on virtualization scenarios that meet the demands of the broad market - enterprise, large organizations and midmarket customers," he said.

The feature cuts come in spite of the fact that Microsoft pushed back the release of the first public beta for Viridian last month, from the first half of 2007 until the second half of the year so as to meet its internal goals for performance and scalability.

At that time, Neil said that Viridian was being designed to scale across a far broader range of systems than the competition, and to scale up to 64 processors, "which I'm proud to say is something no other vendor's product supports," he said.

He also noted then that the team still had "some work to do to have the beta meet the 'scale up' bar we have set. Also, we're tuning Windows Server virtualization to run demanding enterprise IT workloads, even I/O intensive workloads, so performance is very important and we still have some work to do here."

As Microsoft will be demonstrating Viridian at its annual WinHEC show in Los Angeles the week of May 14, Neil said that he "wanted to share this information this week with partners and customers so that no one is surprised at WinHEC when we demo all the other innovations in Windows Server virtualization."

Adding to the pressure on the Redmond, Wash.-based software giant is the fact that it is way behind its Linux competitors on the virtualization front, as Red Hat and Novell's SUSE have both already integrated the

Xen hypervisor technology into their server products.

However, the company pointed out that the changes to Viridian will not impact the schedule for Windows Server Longhorn, which was released as a public beta on April 25 and remains on track for release to manufacturing in the second half of 2007. A public beta of Viridian will also be released at that time.

"This beta will enable a broad group of customers and partners to test workloads and applications on a pre-production version of Windows Server virtualization with the final version of Windows Server Longhorn, Neil said.

Microsoft also remained on track to release the final version of Viridian within 180 days of the release of Windows Server Longhorn, he said.