TERiX Maintenance Perspectives
Ways to get more from your hardware agreements

Getting more than break fix
Maintenance extensions may offer preventative care and much more

July 26, 2011

Keep an eye out for typos.
Details are at the bottom of this newsletter's content.

A Stitch in Time Saves Nine...Servers

The value of preventative care is a given in maintenance fields as diverse as automotive repair and medicine, and it has legitimate value in the IT hardware realm as well. Identifying potential problems before they happen and compensating for them can save time, budget, and human resource burn-out. Traditionally business managers have turned to consultants and dedicated service providers to apply preventative care principles in an efficient and structured way within the IT department and the datacenter, but sophisticated tools have become more widely available from another reliable source: Your existing hardware maintenance provider.

In retrospect it makes perfect sense that the team providing the break-fix services for your server, storage, and networking hardware and operating systems would be a go-to choice for preventative care that uses maintenance metadata. On the one hand, original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) maintenance providers have an incentive to expand service offerings to justify increasing maintenance fees, and on the other hand, many independent maintenance providers already have proprietary tools for diagnosis and error log analysis to automate the process as much as possible. The benefits in both scenarios, whether service is coming from a brand-name OEM or a large independent, go to the end user who not only gets more for their maintenance spend but also gets a longer service life out of their equipment.

Ecosystem Variety

While OEM maintenance providers have been extending the breadth and depth of their service offering from the bottom up as a way to make the hardware products more appealing, independents with strong engineering backgrounds have been able to consolidate a number of features from the top down and across brands. Specific options that may be available as add-ons to service contracts from independents include asset management tools, patch managers, analysis tools, load balancers, security and compliance tools, disaster recovery testing, and a host of visibility dashboards and granular reporting tools. While entire businesses are built on delivering just

one or a few of these toolsets, significant cost and reliability advantages exist in favor of using adding these services as a subscription extension to an existing hardware maintenance contract rather than contracting with a specialist.

Advantages of Maintenance Providers

The primary advantage is simply that your existing hardware maintenance provider already knows your hardware. Rather than bolting on an outside application to vacuum up relevant data, your existing provider is probably already sifting the metadata needed for accurate asset management, identification of bad actors, and patch security; it's already there, so delivering it up in a useful way becomes a matter of form and interface design rather than a complicated and potentially error-prone negotiation of scripts and outputs by some external application.

This leads to the second advantage, that the price of these add-on services can be almost disarmingly inexpensive compared to the price for similar features from a custom or mass developer. Since the data is already at hand, the expensive and tricky step of getting at the overall patch, load, and asset data is not relevant to the price the hardware provider needs to recoup.

Additionally, the idea of having only one throat to choke, and a much larger stake in success applies as well; any satisfaction problems put the hardware support provider in a much more delicate position than an outside software developer who has no additional skin in the game. This is entirely to the advantage of the datacenter customer.

Where to start?

Only hardware maintenance providers large enough to have their own engineering divisions are capable of providing these valuable extensions to break-fix support. If you're a customer, or if you've looking to change your current maintenance on some or all your systems to a different provider anyway, it's worth examining what kinds of service level agreement expansion packs are available to you from each provider you're considering. Generally speaking these expansion packs are not stand-alones, and the break-fix service is the core of the relationship. A great asset management console shouldn't outweigh a mediocre service delivery record when it comes to deciding on a provider, for instance, but if you have to decide between two equally strong break-fix providers, the availability of a great asset management console from one of them can be a fair basis for a decision.

Consider also that some specialized developers offer a wide range of service options that aren't concerned with hardware maintenance, and that rather than replacing some of these services and losing others by choosing the

hardware maintenance extension, a hardware support plan extension can supplement an existing preventative maintenance toolset from a developer. The nature of the metadata is such that the hardware support provider's reports may be able to utilize data from an existing asset management tool, for a combined solution that's better than either one standing alone.
ages of Maintenance Providers

Free Maintenance Consultation

TERiX offers a variety of proprietary service expansion packs including ProServe and T-Net in addition to certified, vendor-independent hardware support for products from over 30 OEMs. The ProServe solution is a simple subscription add-on to existing service levels that provides a web-access portal to asset management, preventative maintenance, security and system health on demand, with real-time reporting that slices and dices the data in ways that are relevant to you. TERiX safely and securely delivers third-party support to over 1000 datacenter locations including fortune 50 companies and 20 of the largest US Federal Government agencies. Give us some basic information about your business and your datacenter locations, and we'll show you the advantages and savings that TERiX can specifically offer to your company. Click through to find out more!

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