Maintenance Perspectives
Ways to get more from your hardware agreements

Four Networks are Better than One:
What March Madness says about vendor lock

March 22, 2011

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

The biggest dance in 17 years

The ratings for March Madness games this year are, basically, ridiculous.

According to CBS, the ratings share for the NCAA tournament this year is the highest it's been since 1994 -- the year Fox News Corp first acquired NFL broadcasting rights. Yahoo and other providers also suggest signups for their online bracket pools are at an all-time high. Why are people so caught up in March Madness this year compared to last year - and compared to the sixteen years before that?

Pundits talk about American discontent with the economy, with politics, even a growing disconnection due to our more text-based and social-media-driven interactions as all contributing in some way to the surge of interest regarding this year's tournament. The truth, however, is simpler than that: This year, the tournament is being carried by four television networks rather than just one. CBS, TNT, TBS and truTV are all carrying games and other coverage, and while it's probably not a popular decision at CBS where there was once exclusive control, certainly the NCAA and college ball in general have benefitted from the change to a more egalitarian offering.

What it means in a datacenter

If you don't follow college ball and could care less about the tournament, you probably already stopped reading (unless you're trying to be the first to find a typo this week). But the take-away value for IT managers is that the same strategies that make March Madness so popular can also be leveraged when it comes to hardware in the datacenter. Your hardware and networking configurations affect the flow of traffic and data through the system. Increasing bandwidth or increasing storage or server resources increase the accessibility of the data--that's pretty obvious. But what's less obvious is that you can extend this egalitarian approach to other IT areas more efficiently and cheaply than by simply multiplying the hardware itself.

The NCAA decided to be egalitarian rather than restrictive, and to permit multiple networks to do what they do best, focusing on the product rather

than the coverage. By extension there may be an advantage to sending some of your storage and even processing into the cloud, or by virtualizing some hardware so that it's allocated as a resource based on need rather than locked down to specific processes. Both of these avoid restrictive single-vendor lockdown, and permit a more organic evolution of the datacenter based on real-world usage which sometimes - indeed, often - is different than how things were expected to go on paper (another thing the datacenter has in common with March Madness games).

Furthermore, when it comes to maintaining hardware, you ensure flexibility and agility for your company when you avoid giving manufacturers complete control over what you can and can't run in your own datacenter by locking down hardware support with them as well. Interoperability is key, obviously, but there may be significant advantages to cross-pollinating your datacenter hardware with specialized appliances - for storage, backup, or other tasks - where these components can provide an advantage. Too often we associate change with a laborious rip-and-replace, when in fact the real goal isn't simply change but advantageous, adaptive evolution. Evolution is based on incremental small changes. This is especially true when it comes to maintenance providers; Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are generally only interested in supporting their own products, while Third Party Maintainers (TPMs) generally support multiple OEM brands as well as multiple lifecycle stages within those brands. Changing to an equally qualified but more flexible provider in turn enables more beneficial incremental hardware changes and leads to more benefits from an egalitarian mindset in the datacenter.

Free Maintenance Consultation

A flexible and open approach can be a significant advantage over a maintenance system locked down to a single vendor. TERiX can maintain one-point-of-contact convenience for hardware maintenance, even functioning as your agent for support on hardware we don't have under contract, just to make it easier for you to deal with one number and one ticketing system while enjoying the advantages of a more open approach. Talk with a TERiX sales consultant and let us know some basic information about your business and your datacenter locations, and we can get in touch quickly with relevant information so you can compare vendors and capabilities. Click through to find out more!

Did you spot a typo?

If you're the first person to report a typo in this newsletter at terix.com/transparency, we'll show our thanks by giving you your choice of either a **Starbucks $15 Gift Card** mailed to you or a **$25 donation to Kiva.org** in your name. TERiX has been a sponsor of Kiva.org since 2007.

Elsa, Phillipines - Kiva Loan Recipient

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