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Stratus Technologies' Avance: New Alternatives for High Availability

Aberdeen research indicates that companies using or considering application and IT infrastructure monitoring and management solutions are doing so largely to maximize the availability of business-critical applications. Aberdeen recently surveyed approximately 120 companies for a Benchmark Study, *Application and Infrastructure Monitoring and Management: Business Growth Starts Here*. Eighty percent (80%) of Best-in-Class respondents cited such availability as the primary driver of their monitoring and management efforts.

On June 10, long-time high-performance computing solution provider Stratus Technologies announced Avance, software intended to make high availability easy and affordable, even for Small to Mid-sized Businesses (SMBs). Two servers connected via Ethernet provide greater than 99.99% availability with no clustering or Storage-Area Network (SAN) required, according to Stratus.

The software runs on industry-standard x86 servers, includes the Citrix XenServer virtualization platform. The company is planning a "channel-neutral" strategy, intending to enable users to purchase Avance from Stratus, from Stratus channel partners, and from supporting server vendors, beginning with Dell. Stratus also intends to support service providers offering high availability services based on Avance, giving users additional options.

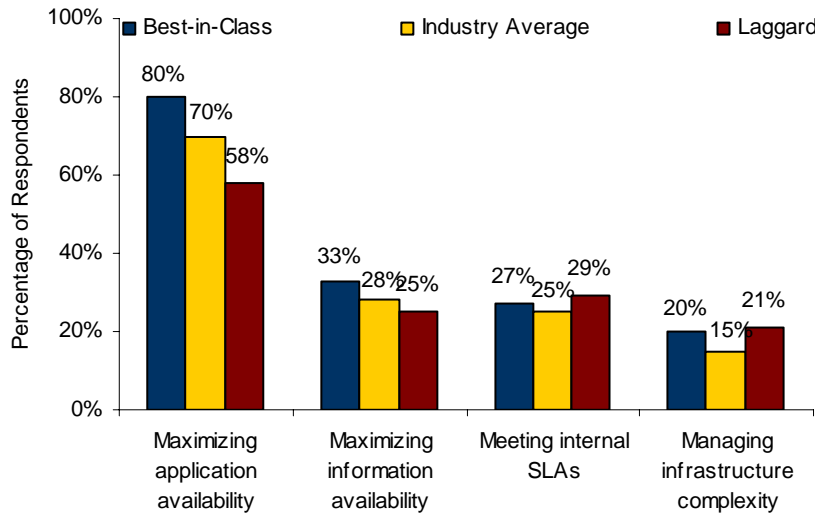
Business Context

For a May 2008 study, *Application and Infrastructure Monitoring and Management: Business Growth Starts Here*, Aberdeen surveyed more than 120 end-user organizations about their relevant activities and plans. Those companies are pursuing and considering monitoring, management, and performance optimization efforts primarily to maximize the availability of business-critical applications and information. Additional drivers of this focus include the need to meet internal Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and a desire to manage increasing infrastructure complexity, as shown in Figure 1.

Market Alert

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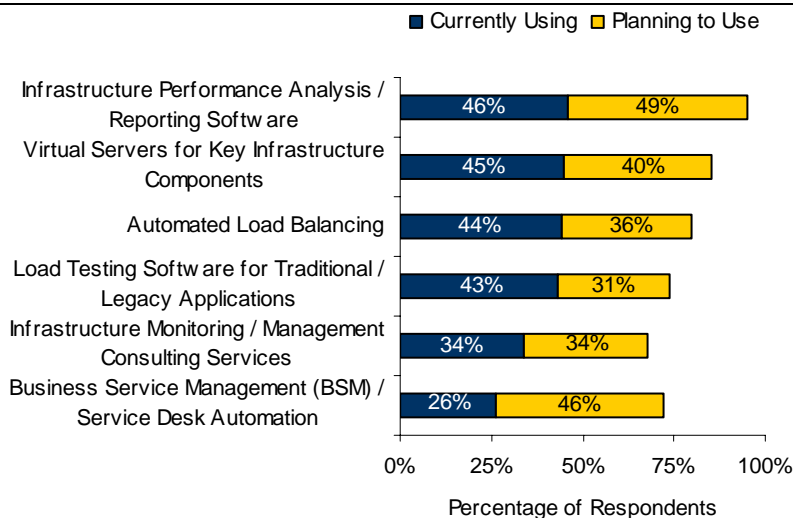
Figure 1: Top Drivers of Application / Infrastructure Monitoring and Management Efforts



Source: Aberdeen Group, May 2008

Survey respondents cited a number of technologies as having direct impacts on their efforts to improve IT infrastructure monitoring, management, and performance. Those technologies cited by the largest numbers of respondents are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Top Technologies for Monitoring, Management, and Performance Improvements



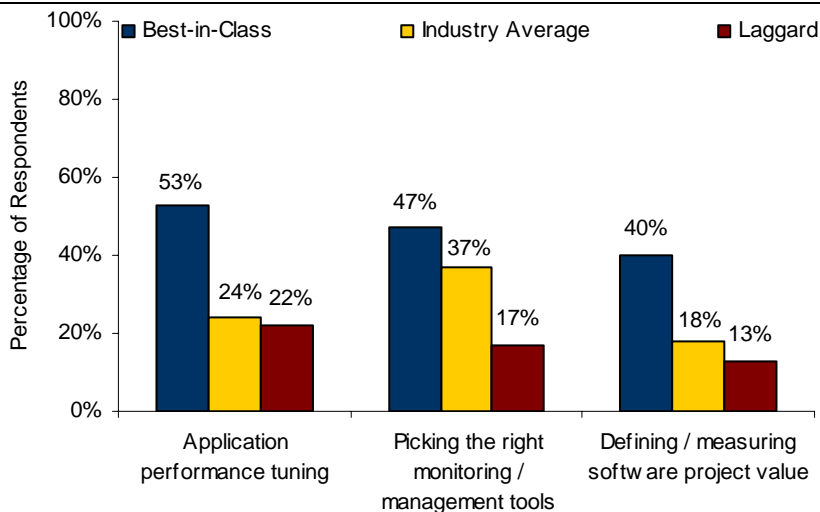
Source: Aberdeen Group, April 2008

Server clustering is currently used by the most respondents, with virtual servers coming in third, just behind performance analysis and reporting software. The prominence of clustering and virtualization among surveyed users indicates a willingness and readiness to invest in solutions that

promise to deliver higher availability of critical applications and information, and to address the other aforementioned drivers.

However, any solution intending to improve availability and performance must also address several key challenges facing users. Among the top three challenges facing the IT departments of Best-in-Class survey respondents during the next 12 months, application performance tuning and defining or measuring software project value ranked first and third, respectively (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Top IT Challenges, Next 12 Months



Source: Aberdeen Group, May 2008

These findings indicate that users are prepared to consider, evaluate, and invest in solutions that promise to address their key challenges effectively. Stratus Avance promises affordable high availability and virtualization that runs on familiar, proven hardware and is transparent to a wide variety of applications. (Avance is priced at \$2,500 per server, with two servers required per deployment.) If the solution delivers on these promises, and is supported by a broad range of Stratus partners, it could aid many companies in their pursuit of greater availability, reliability, business benefit, and value from their IT investments.

Key Takeaways

- **Dig deeper.** Users considering Stratus Avance or any other solution that makes similar promises must ensure that they ask enough questions - and get enough answers - to make the best possible decisions. For example, does each candidate solution provide sufficiently straightforward and easy-to-implement interoperability with current and planned applications and infrastructures? Are there configurations in which the candidate solution or solutions may not function sufficiently to deliver required service levels? Seventy-two percent (72%) of all survey respondents reported that IT infrastructure complexity had increased during the past 12 months.

- **Measure, test and manage - comprehensively, regularly, and proactively.** No IT infrastructure element or solution can deliver maximum or sustained business value without effective management, and what cannot be measured cannot be managed or optimized. Best-in-Class companies surveyed recently by Aberdeen about Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) performance were more than twice as likely as others to manage deployed services proactively and to use performance analysis and reporting software. Of those, 100% saw improvement of SOA application performance, while 69% also saw increases in performance of non-SOA applications.
- **Partner wisely.** Forge and deepen relationships with knowledgeable and responsive vendors, resellers, integrators, and professional service providers focused on effective infrastructure monitoring and management. Leverage their expertise to track the evolution of relevant monitoring and management solutions. Almost half (49%) of Best-in-Class respondents saw spending on professional services related to monitoring, management, or performance increase during the past 12 months, with 21% reporting increases of greater than 10%.
- **Engage support "from above."** Aberdeen research finds that strategic IT initiatives such as those intended to improve overall resource availability and performance succeed best when they have support from senior management. Seventy-three percent (73%) of Best-in-Class companies surveyed have senior executive teams committed to enterprise infrastructure performance. The remaining 27% of Best-in-class respondents indicated that they planned to engage such executive support within 12 months of the survey.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research	
<i>Performance in a Service-Oriented Architecture World</i> ; February 2008	<i>Application and Infrastructure Monitoring and Management: Business Growth Starts Here</i> ; May 2008
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