

VMware takes dual-core licensing plunge

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In a move that should please its customers, but not necessarily its shareholders, VMware announced on Tuesday that it would price its software for dual-core processors at the same price as it does for single-core systems.

The move could worry other software vendors as they come to terms with the impact that the new generation of dual-core and multicore processors will have on their pricing strategies.

In its announcement, VMware said its "entire server virtualisation product line will support dual-core processors, enabling enterprises to fully exploit the power of new dual-core systems" and that it would price its server products "per-socket or per-CPU, rather than charging by individual core".

The move is significant as the software industry tries to come to terms with two competing developments: the rising sales of dual-core and multicore systems and the greater interest in virtualisation.

While other software suppliers like Oracle -- which counts each core of a multi-core chip as three-quarters of a processor -- and Symantec are struggling to come to terms with multicore pricing, VMware has opted to embrace the technology.

"Given the tremendous processing capabilities of dual-core systems, they are a sweet spot for virtualisation," said Jeffrey Engelmann, executive vice-president of marketing at VMware. "Customers can utilise this increased processing power at the same price they pay for single-core servers so they'll essentially be getting double the value when they deploy on dual-core systems."

IBM has a clearly stated policy -- all software on mainframes and high-end Power systems will continue to be priced to reflect the power of the systems so a dual-core system will cost around twice the cost of a single core, a company spokesman said. But it will license x86 dual-core and lower-end OpenPower dual core chips used in Linux servers as if customers were using the equivalent single-core processor.

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