



## Once Again, Unix Unification Announced

At UniForum '96, Hewlett-Packard and the Santa Cruz Operation offered press and other onlookers a glimpse of how they will work together to develop a new generation of Unix. Unlike the "grand alliance" style of announcements at past UniForum Conferences (such as the Advanced Computing Environment initiative of 1992 or the Common Open Software Environment of 1994), this time the podium was not filled with a chorus of vendor executives, each waiting their turn to praise the effort and promise support for the 64-bit operating system technology that is expected to emerge later this year from the joint development effort. Nor were all of the OEMs that SCO inherited from Novell on hand to show their support for Unix being under new management. On the other hand, the characterization by Scott McNealy, Sun Microsystems CEO, of the alliance as "two little companies" claiming to be redefining Unix is certainly

ly an understatement.

Plenty of work lies ahead for the HP/SCO team that is charged with delivering 64-bit technology for the target architecture of the Intel micro-processor code-named Merced (and popularly known as P7). "We should start by removing the redundancies and deadwood that have made Unix bulkier than it need be," said Lew Platt, HP CEO, during his keynote address, which happened to precede the announcement.

Doug Michels, executive vice president and chief technology officer of SCO, who estimates that there are tens of millions of lines of well-modularized Unix source code to choose from, described how the work will proceed. "Rather than trying to make everyone's contributions fit into the next-generation Unix, we'll lay everything on the table and then choose the best of breed," he said.

Much of this work will be done by Unix developers in Florham Park, NJ, who have seen two changes of ownership in just over three years, which began when AT&T divested itself of Unix System Laboratories. According to Bilye Abrams, marketing manager for HP's open systems software division in Cupertino, CA, about 200 developers were hired from an available pool of over 350.

Carl Ziegler, chief technology officer of the Unix

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## X/Open, OSF Form The Open Group

In what was widely seen as an inevitable move, X/Open Co. and Open Software Foundation (OSF) have decided to form a consolidated organization known as The Open Group. Eventually to be run by a single management team, the organization will retain X/Open's headquarters in Reading, England, and OSF's in Cambridge, MA, as well as other offices. A search is under way for a president and CEO for the new organization, who is expected to operate out of Cambridge. A single advisory board for The Open Group will consist of representatives from both X/Open and OSF.

Announced in February at UniForum '96 in San Francisco, the consolidation of the industry's two most prominent open systems consortia was greeted with nods of approval. "Unix is getting rational in its old age," said Doug Michels, executive vice president and chief technical officer of the Santa Cruz Operation. "This is an obvious evolution that probably should have happened sooner."

Also approving were users like Denis Brown, vice president and general manager of PRC, a Vienna, VA, systems integration and consulting firm. "I think it's a real win-win situation. It will be good for the user," Brown said. The new structure will funnel user requirements through a single Open Group Customer Council (OGCC), which becomes a more powerful voice in the unified organization.

Viewed historically, the move is part of a continuing consolidation in industry consortia that began in late 1993 when Unix International, a promoter of Unix System V, was disbanded. In 1994 OSF reorganized and laid off about half of its staff, deciding to outsource product development and giving X/Open a role in OSF activities. During the meetings that led to that announcement at UniForum '94, there was widespread speculation that the "new OSF" would eventually change its name. This consolidation is a step toward that destination, although X/Open and OSF both now say they will retain their names and trademarks.

Even though the president of the new organization has not been appointed, there was information on who it will not be. Geoff Morris, X/Open president and CEO, said he will not be a candidate but will remain as president of X/Open. James Bell, interim president and CEO of OSF while on leave from Hewlett-Packard, said he would return to HP as director of open systems alliances when The Open Group chooses its new leader.

In conjunction with the consolidation, UniForum tightened its

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Technology Group, also in Florham Park, which promotes the distribution of UnixWare, says that morale had been low after Novell's decision to get out of the Unix business last year. The New Jersey-based developers chosen by HP are delighted to have found both a new

OpenView system management software and other capabilities that will be integrated at the operating system level), SCO's Open Server development team and the former UnixWare developers hired for this effort.

The optimization will come in large part from chip vendors, primarily Intel.

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employer and a new sponsor. "Everyone here realizes that this is UnixWare's last chance to evolve into a high-volume operating system," says Ziegler. "If HP and SCO botch this effort, potential OEMs will buy their Unix from someone else."

Is the latest effort to create a unified Unix driven by ideals or fear? Platt ended his keynote address by saying that the spirit of collaboration and competition has motivated HP to move Unix forward. But Judith Hurwitz, president of Hurwitz Consulting of Newton, MA, sees reasons to worry about the monolithic Microsoft platform. "Microsoft has 2,000 developers eating, drinking and sleeping NT," she says.

### How to Join In

These days, even an alliance between two vendors typically trails a long list of participants. Scott MacGregor, SCO senior vice president of products, described four ways that other companies could participate in this alliance: contribute core technology, optimize it, productize it or resell it. Most of the core technology will come from HP's developers (not only HP-UX developers but also developers of the

In addition, NEC announced that it has set up a facility in San Jose, CA, to develop a low-end MIPS chip to run this new operating system on small-scale devices, such as point-of-sale systems. At the high end, Hitachi plans to develop a main-frame-level implementation.

Productizers are yet to be announced. According to Michels, they will be companies that add value by developing device drivers and other components that will run on the new OS.

The reseller sector will determine whether this operating system can gain market share from SunSoft Solaris, the best-selling Unix brand name. For obvious reasons, computer vendors prefer not to license the operating system of a direct competitor. Therefore, it may be attractive to OEMs to be able to license from a software vendor such as SCO rather than HP. This perhaps is one reason that Alok Mohan, SCO CEO, took pains in his own keynote to position the company as a technology provider. Former Novell OEMs Unisys, ICL, NCR (switching back from being called AT&T Global Information Systems) and the IBM PC Server Group have announced their intentions

to resell this operating system when it becomes available in late 1997 or 1998.

Henry Robinson, director of technology planning for Pyramid Technology in San Jose, explains why buying an operating system developed by other companies makes more sense than developing one's own. "To create our own version of Unix would require tremendous research and development simply to make the glue, and glue does not differentiate us in our customers' eyes," he says. "Being able to deliver solutions to our customers faster and less expensively is what makes the real difference."

### Sun Rains on Parade

As McNealy's aside indicated, Sun, which bought perpetual rights to Unix source code from Novell about two years ago, was not impressed by the announcement from HP and SCO. In fact, the company was anxious to "correct the impression given by their rhetoric," said Janpieter Scheerder, president of the SunSoft subsidiary. "They don't set the direction for Unix, and any allusion to that is nonsense."

In particular, Scheerder emphasized that SunSoft already has a 64-bit implementation of Solaris supporting some functions on its UltraSparc chip and will provide 64-bit Solaris for the Intel platform. "Our relation with Intel is to leverage volume potential," he said. "We'll support only their volume product—P7." (Representatives of Digital Equipment Corp. were quick to point out that they, too, have a full 64-bit implementation of Digital Unix on their Alpha processor.)

Scheerder also noted that the joint press conference, held two hours after The Open Group's announcement, was inappropriate to that spirit of agreement. "The wars aren't still going on," he said. "The Unix split is gone. Operating environments get sold today, not operating systems. We need standards and interfaces." **IT**

—Peggy King

## X/Open, OSF Form The Open Group

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relationship with the combined consortia, announcing that blocks of individual UniForum memberships would be made available to all customer members of The Open Group. In addition, Open Group sponsors will become corporate and end-user sponsors of UniForum. "It's a natural fit," said Bell, who also serves on the UniForum board of directors. "We help open systems professionals grow, and this enables The Open Group's members to take advantage of the tools that UniForum has to offer."

"We are doing something important for the industry," said Richard Jaross, UniForum executive director. "This is what the industry wants us to do." Collaboration of The Open Group with the UnixWare Technology Group, the Object Management Group, the World Wide Web Consortium and the Petrotechnical Open Software Corp. (an oil and gas industry group) was also announced.


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### Moving Ahead

X/Open and OSF say they plan to maintain the bulk of their current activities. X/Open will continue to develop interface specifications such as the Single UNIX Specification, which emerged from the Spec 1170 proposal initiated in 1993. OSF plans to keep facilitating collaboration among users, system vendors and software vendors in developing software technology such as its Distributed Computing Environment (DCE) and the Motif user interface, which is employed in the Unix Common Desktop Environment. In addition to the new customer council, The Open Group will have a single marketing council serving both X/Open and OSF.

The OGCC replaces X/Open's User Council and OSF's End-User Forum. It will consist of representatives of more than 300 companies, research institutions and government agencies. Three of its members will sit and vote on the 17-member Open Group Advisory Board. The OGCC was to hold its inaugural meeting early in March in San Francisco.

In the future, The Open Group will focus on three main areas, Morris said: platform development, distributed computing and the Internet. In the platform development area, the organization plans to extend portability and scalability. In distributed computing, the emphasis will be on managing a diversity of computing solutions. In the Internet area, the focus will be on establishing secure, open and robust systems for electronic commerce. Already under way is a project to integrate the Java programming language with DCE-Web, a technology that applies DCE to enhance the Web, particularly in the areas of security and naming. (For more on these initiatives, see "Inside The Open Group" on page 48.)

In conjunction with The Open Group's formation, it was also revealed that leading Unix system suppliers have delivered to X/Open a proposal that extends the Single UNIX Specification to encompass 64-bit application environments. The initiative is aimed at reducing the cost and complexity of multiplatform application and system software development, by smoothing migration of 32-bit programs to 64-bit platforms. According to Mike Lambert, X/Open chief technology officer, products that conform to the new specification should be available in about two years. 

—Don Dugdale

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