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Tech news for business

By Geoff Nairn

Keeping cloud-based apps up-and-running

Eucalpytus Systems has released Eucalyptus 3, an infrastructure-as-a-service offering designed to privide access to applications running on private clouds, even if a server fails. If a system hosting a private cloud fails, Eucalyptus 3 will switch users over to a standby system which has the same application running concurrently on a different physical machine. The switch-over process happens automatically so, in theory, users should not notice any service issues. Conventional 'high-availability' IT systems have existed for many years but they require redundant hardware to stand idle, which makes them very expensive. "High availability is one of the most sought-after and difficult features to implement in a private cloud platform," says Eucalyptus Systems' CEO Marten Mickos.

Bridging the cloud divide

IBM adds to its SmartCloud portfolio cloud computing offerings with a new hybrid cloud solution that draws heavily on its recent acquisition of Cast Iron. IBM is pushing this hybrid model to businesses that want to retain their own internal IT systems but do not want to miss out on the benefits of moving certain business functions to IT services provided in the public cloud. The hybrid model promises the best of both worlds but it can be tricky to pull off in practice, particularly for IT departments which will have to handle the integration headaches. IBM's new hybrid offering attempts to bridge the gap between public and private worlds by making the public cloud look more like an in-house IT resource that can be governed and managed by the IT department in much the same way as traditional on-premises resources.

Microsoft embraces Chinese Linux

Microsoft is not known for its enthusiasm for open-source software. But it may in future be known for its vision when it comes to engaging China's rapidly developing IT market. How else do we explain the US software giant's strange agreement with China Standard Software Co (CSSC) to jointly offer solutions based on NeoKylin, a Chinese variant of the Linux open-source operating system aimed at China's public sector. Microsoft hopes to win over these customers by demonstrating that its Hyper-V virtualisation technology can equally well support NeoKylin-based computers as well as servers running Windows. Nevertheless, Microsoft now finds itself in the unlikely position of selling Linux to get a foot in the China's nascent cloud computing market.

Securing cloud-based customer data

Security specialist Vasco Data Security International is to offer its cloud-based authentication technology on AppExchange, the business applications exchange of **Salesforce.com**. The move allows businesses to protect access to customer and other data stored in employee applications running on Salesforce.com's cloud computing platform using Vasco's Digipass technology. Digipass is a so-called two-factor authentication technology. It requires all authorised users to be equipped with small single-button devices that generate the one-time passwords needed to gain access. While two-factor authentication creates the strongest protection against unauthorised users trying to access a system, it creates extra headaches for businesses that try to implement it, which is why Vasco has chosen to launch this SaaS offering.

Mobile internet goes mainstream

Is the CEO sceptical about your company's new mobile marketing strategy? Market research firm eMarketeer has released data that should hopefully convince the most cynical of audiences that the mobile internet is fast becoming a mainstream marketing and sales channel. Currently, around 100m US mobile phone owners access the internet at least once a month, says eMarketeer. By 2015 almost 61 percent of mobile owners -- half the US population -- will be accessing the internet on the go. While mobile internet use is and will continue to be dominated by the coveted 18-34 age group, their parents - and grandparents - are discovering that mobile phones can be used for more than just talk. By 2015, the number of mobile internet users aged 45 to 64 is set to more than double to 45m, while the silver surfers aged over 65 will grow three-fold to 11m.