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IBM Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS—Removing the Pain from Mainframe Asset Discovery

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IBM Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS – Removing the Pain from Mainframe Asset Discovery

Introduction

IBM's System z mainframe solutions have defined the highest levels and benefits of enterprise class computing for virtually their entire history. In fact, the continuing development of server solutions, from Industry Standard architectures to cloud computing, has been energized by virtualization and RAS (reliability, availability and security) technologies which have long been commonplace on mainframe systems. At the same time, IBM has proactively evolved System z to support new technologies like Linux and Java with the result that sales of mainframes for both traditional applications and newer strategies like server and workload consolidation have continued to grow.

But System z solutions are not without challenges. For example, organizations often have a less than ideal understanding of what IBM and third party applications are being used within their mainframe environments. That can affect a range of software-related issues, from strategic IT planning and funding to implementing chargeback strategies. To address those and other headaches, IBM's Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS provides an integrated, centralized solution for the automated discovery, identification and management of software and usage information. As such, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS offers IBM customers a notable solution for increasing their insight into critical System z assets, improving application management and making better informed, more cost-effective business decisions.

Why Mainframe Computing Matters

An honest assessment of the landscape of enterprise-class computing shows that IBM's System z mainframe solutions have been a dominant feature for virtually all of their 45 year history. This is a simple fact of life even for IBM competitors who are only too happy to deride System z as old-fashioned and choking in the dust of the Industry Standard server pack which easily leads the race for sheer number of servers sold. But many of those same detractors comfortably define their own systems as "mainframe-like," proving that there is plenty of room for unselfconscious irony even in the most rarified sectors of the business computing market.

Rather than hash out what others mean by claiming "mainframe-like" capabilities for themselves, it seems more worthwhile to consider what IBM's System z actually is. Try essentially unmatched reliability, availability and security (RAS) performance, to the point that the mainframe stands as de facto yard stick by which other business systems are measured. Additionally, IBM has not allowed System z to rest on its notable laurels. In fact, one of the main reasons that sales of System z workloads continue to grow year-over-year is due to the company constantly evolving the platform via new and emerging technologies.

These include specialty co-processors which can enhance applications and workloads such as the Integrated Facility for Linux (IFL – Linux), zAAP (JAVA and XML) and zIIP (data serving applications including ERP and CRM, and data warehousing and business intelligence processes). By consolidating many distributed servers to handle the same workload on a few specialty System z co-processors, organizations can attain significant savings in software

licensing, system administrative, hardware maintenance, data center space and energy costs.

Virtualization, an undeniably hot datacenter topic for the past few years, began on mainframe systems. But more important than its pedigree, IBM's System z virtualization offers levels of performance, scalability and flexibility that are simply jaw-dropping in comparison to other technologies. As a result, businesses can gain significant benefits from using System z virtualization to create a single "roof" for consolidating, securing, and managing hundreds or even thousands of applications, workloads and processes. Doing so can also help them maintain or increase the value of their overall computing investments and gain greater degrees of IT management integration and control.

System z's Benefits Beget New Challenges

The desire to better manage and fully maximize IT assets and investments is common for organizations of every size, from the smallest business to the largest enterprise. But continuing economic challenges make such goals more than sensible from a business point of view. In some cases, poor IT management practices can endanger or even help sink an at-risk company. In other situations, organizations are unknowingly encumbered by a distributed computing "mindset" that can trip or cripple datacenter strategies before they begin.

Your own company may itself be familiar with this malady: On the upside, distributed computing solutions have placed IT processes and assets within easy reach of virtually every employee, work group and department. On the downside, enabling IT efforts without implementing parallel oversight or gaining usage insights can infect overarching IT strategies and undermine hoped-for efficiencies. In fact, it seems reasonable to say that encouraging computing autonomy without responsibility lays a foundation for eventual IT anarchy.

That situation can be further exacerbated when organizations virtualize and consolidate applications and workloads, replacing literal physical server sprawl with virtual confusion. In short, a single roof sometimes covers an uncomfortably, even terminally, cluttered house. And though such problems are certainly common in distributed computing environments, they are not confined there. IT problems tend to grow over time, even in best-intentioned organizations that depend on innovative technologies like IBM's System z solutions.

For example, in mainframe environments complexities – such as who is using software, and where and how it is being used – which have grown for years can significantly impact asset management. While some may consider this an issue that can be easily addressed with occasional or annual system "check-ups", it is anything but. Flexibility is a hallmark of IBM System z, making mainframes highly fluid environments capable of quickly scaling up and down to meet constantly shifting business and user demands. As a result, effectively managing software assets is crucial for maintaining System z health and IT administrator sanity.

This is especially the case for organizations that have thousands of employees using software, but mid-market System z customers with constrained IT budgets and expertise face particular difficulties, as well. Without effective asset discovery and management, businesses are effectively "flying blind" with regard to their computing infrastructures, and risk mismanaging and not gaining the full value of their IT investments

Keeping System z Assets under Control

How is your company dealing with these issues? More to the point, how can you determine how well current processes address mainframe asset discovery and management, or whether your organization even has such processes in place? The following questions offer a good place to start:

- How are we currently monitoring our System z software assets, usage and licenses?
- How many applications and tools do we have currently deployed?
- What are they and what do they cost?
- Who is using that software and for what?
- How often are those applications being used?
- Is that use accurately reflected in chargeback processes?
- Are we over or undersubscribed?
- Are any applications redundant, out of date or not being used?
- Can any applications be eliminated or consolidated?
- Are all our software licenses up to date?
- Would we be in legal or financial danger if we were audited?

Understanding how your organization addresses these issues is a good first step. But with that knowledge in hand, how can you decide what ideal System z asset discovery and management looks like? We would suggest that effective solutions include key features and capabilities that:

- Provide easily accessible, usable management tools
- Offer a secure central location for all asset and usage information
- Create inventories of current mainframe systems and clarify what software assets you have
- Continually monitor System z infrastructures for software status and usage
- Create reports detailing which departments and individuals are using software, how often and for what purposes
- Identify little used or unused applications and tools
- Suggest what software might be consolidated or eliminated
- Are easily integrated with solutions for distributed system asset discovery, and
- Support end-to-end systems asset discovery/management processes and strategies

IBM's Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS – Removing the Pain from Mainframe Asset Discovery

Fortunately, IBM mainframe owners have just such a solution in Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS, which is designed to specifically improve their management of mainframe software assets. How does it do this? First, by automatically discovering IBM and third party software running on the z/OS platform, and identifying those products by factors including vendor, title, version, maintenance levels. In addition, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS automatically creates and updates a complete system inventory via high-speed scanning and in-house application tagging, making certain that companies have centralized, accurate, up-to-date records of existing software assets.

IBM Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS also helps organizations track software location and usage in a granular manner, identifying where applications and tools are installed and used

by factors such as region, machine, LPAR, storage volumes and related datasets. It monitors software usage by job name, department and individuals, and also measures usage growth month by month. This feature provides data for current chargeback process and future capacity planning. Just as importantly, though, it can help identify unused or obsolete software, and also spot potential opportunities for consolidating or eliminating applications and tools.

Along with enabling real time management and analysis, IBM Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS also generates interactive reports that incorporate convenient hyperlinks for drilling down into specific details. This provides valuable information for long term IT planning processes and upgrade cycles but that data can also be critical during contract negotiations with software vendors. Perhaps most importantly, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS is anything but a one trick pony. It is part of a broader IBM IT Asset Management portfolio of products which are designed to work seamlessly together.

IBM Tivoli Asset Management for IT tracks and manages hardware and software assets through all the stages of their lifecycle, from planning through end-of-life. It combines all the asset details with inventory, procurement, financial, maintenance, contract and license entitlement information. Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS integrates with Tivoli Asset Management for IT to bring in the discovered mainframe asset and usage data and link it to contracts and entitlements. This helps determine whether or not organizations are over or under licensed, and allows them to make educated, cost-based decisions.

Additionally, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS can be used in concert with IBM Tivoli Asset Discovery for Distributed for end-to-end software asset management across heterogeneous server platforms. IBM's IT Asset Management portfolio is a leading solution that enables Audit Readiness, Software Asset Management, Asset Lifecycle Management and IT Financial Management across both mainframe and distributed platforms. In essence, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS qualifies as yet another innovative solution that helps expand and extend the already considerable value proposition of IBM's flagship mainframe systems.

Summary Analysis

While IBM's System z solutions define the highest levels of enterprise computing, their benefits can also present customers significant challenges. In established mainframe infrastructures, where hundreds or even thousands of employees access System z applications, organizations are often uncertain of what software they utilize, and where and how those applications are being used. This problem can be especially severe for mid-market organizations, with more limited IT budgets and expertise. All in all, effectively managing software assets plays a critical role in maintaining mainframe health and IT administrator sanity.

To address these issues, effective solutions like IBM's Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS can provide powerful tools for companies to better understand and manage their mainframe software investments. Designed to help companies clearly identify IBM and third party applications and tools, it also measures software usage and growth, and assists in identifying unused or obsolete applications and those that might be consolidated. Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS also generates interactive reports, providing valuable, granular information for IT planning processes, software upgrade strategies and contract negotiations.

Finally, Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS can be used in concert with Tivoli Asset Discovery for Distributed and Tivoli Asset Management for IT to help companies paint a comprehensive portrait of their IT usage, requirements, asset costs and investments in both mainframe and distributed environments. Overall, organizations wishing to develop a greater understanding of their mainframe software assets and investments and to make better, smarter IT-related business decisions would be wise to consider IBM's Tivoli Asset Discovery for z/OS.

About Pund-IT, Inc.
Pund-IT emphasizes understanding technology and product evolution and interpreting the effects these changes will have on business customers and the greater IT marketplace.