

Interview with Buell Duncan

Interview by Dan Duffy

Recording, transcript, and photos by Léo Lefebvre



*Buell Duncan, General Manager
of IBM's eServer iSeries*

Date: February 12, 2002

DD: Welcome to Toronto...

BD: Thank you, delighted to be here!

DD: Rumors persist that the iSeries will eventually merge with the pSeries into a sort of hybrid box. Is that true? And if it is true, when it's going to happen?

BD: No! That's not true at all! The

iSeries and the pSeries are each targeted at specific market opportunities and offer customers unique value propositions. What we will continue to do is to insure that the best of both is incorporated as much as possible. In other words sharing the powerful microprocessor technology gives each platform tremendous performance attributes. The more we can share and build on solid building blocks of each platform, the more effective we think we will be in the market place. But make no mistake, the value proposition of the pSeries is to be the world's leading Unix platform, the value proposition for iSeries is to be an integrated platform that supports multiple operating environments.

DD: And there is no intention in the short term, or in the long term, to change that strategy?

BD: We have no intention of having them combined into one platform. For example, look at the difference between a Toyota and a Lexus. Fundamentally as they go down the manufacturing line, it's exactly the same car being built, but at the end of that process each one is customized for its own marketplace. Many of the manufacturing processes and components are today shared and even more so in the future will be shared between the platforms but, at the end, it's the packaging of the iSeries, and the software integration in particular that makes it unique, and that's what our customers value.

DD: Would you say that iSeries is the Lexus and that Unix is the... Corolla?

BD: I think it would be more fair to say that both are Lexus in their own line.

DD: Ok...

[All laughed.]

DD: Will there be a hardware announcement this year on the iSeries?

BD: Yes. By the end of this year, we intend to deliver a high-end 32-way processor to continue to give our largest customers increased performance and capacity.

DD: Will it be a 2432 or something like that, which would incorporate all the beautiful features of processor-on-demand, etc., as opposed to a 1224 or 1218?

BD: Yes, we'll build on the strength of the systems that we've delivered, like capacity on demand and dedicated processors for a specific solution workload. Most importantly what our customer are asking for is to continue to invest in software enhancements and at the same time to deliver capacity, as they continue to grow and put more and more workload on the platform.

DD: Some of the TUG members feel that a lot of the unique features of the AS/400 have been lost in the current IBM eServer branding efforts. How do you feel about that, and are there any other iSeries specific marketing campaigns coming?

BD: Yes... First let me say that what's special about this business is evidenced by the highest customer satisfaction that is associated with the iSeries. It's the passion our customers, our partners and IBM'ers have around promoting this platform. As to whether the eServer strategy a good thing – I think there is no question that for IBM it's good overall. (You can see the success of each of our individual server lines.) I also think that it's been good for the iSeries as well. For example, we benefit from the ability to leverage the Linux messaging, and to leverage the expanded workload on

WebSphere. These are core attributes of leveraging the technology that we share with pSeries. There is integration that we can do with the xSeries as we team with the Raleigh lab more closely.

Then there is the integration of software support for LPAR, which the zSeries does so well, and we now do on iSeries. These are some of the things that, working together as a family of servers, gives IBM a tremendous competitive advantage in the marketplace. Said simply, if I were Sun, I'd be far more concerned about competing against a "team IBM" under the eServer brand than I would be among individual businesses that might not share together. So, there no question at all that iSeries, and ultimately our customers, get significant benefits.

Now, to your second question, about marketing and getting this message out! I believe we can do a better job, I think we will do a better job. As an example, this week in Canada there is a full-page ad about exchange and exchange server running specifically on iSeries. This ad is running in ComputerWorld in Canada. I think you can expect to see, over the coming months, much more aggressive advertising and co-marketing with ISV's and with Solutions Providers to get this message out.

Why? Because there's never been a time where the value proposition of iSeries' reliability, security, and ease of use is more appropriate than it is right now. And it's essential to let our customers know about the ability to add new workloads to the platform where it could be a new e-business application, where it could be Linux workload in a partition, where it could be more Microsoft Windows applications/ Intel workload over to the platform. To do that, we recognize we have to be more aggressive and we intend to be, in advertising and marketing.



Léo Lefebvre

DD: So other than PACE, are you aggressively going after other applications that aren't currently on iSeries, if it make sense for them?

BD: Absolutely! By the time this magazine is published we will have announced NAVision moving over. NAVision is at the low end of ERP applications, but it's one of the most popular in the world. It's an Intel application that we will deliver that this year. We recently deliver Siebel on the platform. We are currently working with 200 ISV's, as we speak, to move their applications over to the iSeries and I believe over forty of them will be complete, and announced publicly within the next six months.

DD: And those are net new applications?

BD: Those are net new applications.

DD: Great! That's great news... You spoke about Linux this morning, and you recently announced some Linux specific servers. Is Linux really going be deployed on the iSeries? Are you dedicated to this, or is it just marketing hype and at the end are we going to be switched to a pSeries?

BD: I can tell you that I believe in our analysts, and our customers around the world who are telling us that Linux on iSeries has the potential to be even bigger on this platform than it is on zSeries. Time will tell... but the commitment of IBM to supporting it on the iSeries is certainly there. Again, our ability to leverage things like LPAR gives us a unique advantage in doing this. There's no question about it. What you will begin to see is a flood, starting in the coming months – a flood of customer testimonials and write-ups about success stories about Linux on iSeries.

So, this is not (I cannot over-emphasize it) definitely not just a marketing campaign.

DD: Ok, great.

LL: I guess there is another thing needed to make Linux progress at a good pace. You basically have to have...



Dan Duffy

BD: ...applications!

LL: Yes, applications. So the question is: what specific actions are being taken in this area?

BD: Well, we're very actively engaged with ISV's. We're working with companies like Symantec and their firewall applications. We're working with companies like MAPICS who are re-writing their applications into Linux, and literally dozens of other companies. What we found in the process is the ease with which these applications are brought to the iSeries! Linux has proven to be more productive and easier to move over than, frankly, a lot of us thought at the beginning. So I'm very encouraged about the ability of iSeries to support Linux.

LL: So, do you think that Linux will have a long life?

BD: Oh, I don't think there's any question about that. I go back to what Sun has announced this week, which I think shocked everybody in the marketplace. They've changed their whole strategy – and (it appears) what they're doing is abandoning or moving away from Solaris, because of the momentum Linux has in the marketplace. And we intend on the iSeries (just as we have done on the zSeries) to deploy it and support it for the benefit of our customers.

DD: What is IBM (and your division in

particular) doing to promote local users groups and COMMON?

BD: My first association with the AS/400 was back in 1994. The reason frankly, I'm in Canada today is to try to personally participate and also to encourage our entire team to actively participate with COMMON and Users Groups around the world. This is a business. (It's not about technology.) It's a business about delivering solutions to customers. It's a business about supporting customers, and we're fortunate to have such strong users group like TUG. We have an obligation as a company, and certainly in the iSeries business, to do everything possible to best support those groups. I'd like to think that we've made real good progress in the past years with COMMON (in our relationship with them) and I'd like to think that we're bringing value as we're strengthening our communication with all of our users groups.

DD: How is your iSeries nation initiative going?

BD: I'm encouraged. We have over 41,000 citizens – and it's proven to be a very good vehicle. We're evolving beyond promotion. It's all about communication and education. We've done a number of citizens' chats (web cast conferences) and we're going to continue to stay committed to this, as just one but certainly very important vehicle for communication between IBM and our customers.

DD: Now, there seems to be a little bit of tug-of-war between the iSeries folks in Rochester and the storage people within IBM over how to implement a SAN in an iSeries environment. Could you comment on that?

BD: We made the decision many years ago to integrate storage on the system.

We have absolutely no intention of changing that strategy, because the benefits to our customers (both in terms of reliability and ease of use, particularly from a management and security standpoint) is enormous. And we will stay on that path. Having said that, it is also very true that storage area networks are very important in many environments and we have to provide support for that as well... So I'd like to think the iSeries has the best of all strategies. For customers who



don't need the ability to attach to external storage and share it with other systems, our internal strategy (and we will continue to work to drive our cost down and our reliability up) is the right approach. Where the customer needs that with a high-speed link, we can have the ability now that we did not have before V5R1, to support external SANs. At the end of the day, what's important is what's right for the customer. To prove that point, we compensate our iSeries sales force when they work with a customer to implement a SHARK system in a SAN environment attached to an iSeries. The real question is, "Are we going away from internal storage?" and the answer is; "Absolutely not!" But we are certainly going to support external storage where it makes sense.

DD: How would you describe the next five years for the iSeries and what do you see the growth curve to be like?

BD: Obviously, I can't really give you a financial forecast... But if you look over the past twelve months you would say (although every quarter was not exactly the same) that overall the iSeries business did very well and gained some market share. Business in Canada was very solid last year for iSeries. Business in Europe and in China was extremely strong. What drove that? If you get underneath, it is this focus on solutions. I think our ability to continue to invest in the integration and the support of these environments would bring more solutions to the platform. Our ability to market those solutions effectively with our partners. Our ability to have a trained sales force to drive those solutions would say that the future for iSeries is very bright for a long time to come. It is a business about solutions; it is a business about customers, and connecting the two. To the degree that we execute on that, the iSeries has a very bright future!

DD: My last question is very important. I can coach you on that or you can just answer straight up. Who is your favorite Toronto sports team: The Leafs? The Raptors? Or the Argos? [Big laugh]

DD: I think Buell should answer. There's a saying here, the Toronto Argonauts are in the Canadian Football League.

BD: I know that... I know who they are... [Another big laugh]

DD: But the answer is ...

BD: The Blue Jays!

T G



1
ABLE-ONE

1
ABLE-ONE

DRIVING YOUR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

ABLE-ONE has a track record of delivering...

▲ **Technology**

i / p / x Series Servers, Printing Systems,
Storage, Barcode & Wireless Networking, & more.

▲ **Resources**

Solution Design & Spec, Project Management,
Satellite Education, Systems Consolidation, & more.

▲ **Applications**

Security, CRM, B.I., ERP, e-Mail, Collaboration,
Workflow, Financial & HR, Manufacturing, & more.



ABLE-ONE is "dedicated to excellence in delivering service and solutions" achieving the IBM "Champion Award" for four consecutive years.

Call ABLE-ONE To Drive Your Solutions From "Need" to "Succeed"!

ABLE-ONE
SYSTEMS INC.

TEL: 800-461-2253
SWO: 519-570-9100
www.ableone.com