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In our über-fascinating industry, sly and trendy words fit their description by coming and going. I've heard so many in my nearly three decades of computing that I think we've moved on to at least volume 14. We love to coin phrases to capture the newest "mashup" of vocabulary (e.g., Anything 2.0, Social) in the hope it means something and becomes one of the few survivors.

But I pick on the phrase, "disruptive technology" originally coined by Clayton M. Christensen in his prescient 1995 article "Disruptive Technologies: Catching the Wave." Fifteen long years of refinement have given us the generally accepted definition "new way of doing things that disrupt or overturn traditional business methods and practices." Think Google's effect on Web usage, Apple's re-creation of a music player (and now a mobile phone) and now—IBM's and its latest innovation for the z Community.

The newly announced IBM zEnterprise System is replete with the traditional marketing hyperbole, including "revolutionary, robust and efficient," and to be certain there are tangibly impressive improvements in performance, cost, and even energy consumption. But pay close attention to one very important element in the announcement where IBM gets the credit for potentially upsetting the apple cart (but not Apple's cart), the zEnterprise BladeCenter Extension, or zBX.

As someone who has been involved in trying to help explain and expand IBM's strategies for most of my career, the sometimes disparate collection of various platforms (despite being literally the *only* company on the planet with an offering for *all* of the major ones), it's always seemed as if they weren't under one roof. First, IBM revamped its marketing strategy nearly a decade ago with the rebranding of Systems z, p, x and i, just to offer it uniformity of message. And there has been technological melding for years as economies of scale and invention sharing gave way to common components and production processes.

In the true spirit of disruptive, however, the zBX portends a completely different value proposition. Is the target computing utopia really the concept of one platform, one host for all applications and data? Perhaps with hindsight we would have gone that way. But fits and starts and competing ideas have made this as impractical as a universal spoken language. Instead, IBM's announcement addressed one significant reason why the choice of environments exhausted the pocketbooks and patience of computing organizations every-

where: the monstrous effort required to secure, manage, and scale the various platforms.

Once IBM's statement of directions are delivered, the essential value of the zBX is to use one physical hardware host to manage workloads across the enterprise. In reality, not in promise, and all while using a tightly coupled blade rack over a high-speed bus for information transfer. The BladeCenter will host System i (AIX/Linux) and System x (Windows Server) processors but will be managed by IBM's new software that lords over everything from the energy usage to the physical security to the overall availability. Lessons learned in 45 years of computing have helped IBM cultivate a climate of systems management akin to the fine art that Porsche brings to its automobile engineering. IBM describes it as "mainframe-like governance" across the enterprise. Why not use the same gold standard to describe it as every competitor? Except, IBM is the inventor and continued purveyor of the gold.

In plain language this means you can upgrade your server farms of many logo varieties to one, essentially homogenous hardware for heterogeneous computing. Windows Server, Linux, UNIX, and System z technologies in one physical cabinet(s), all managed with one unified piece of software. All delivered by the only company that could bring this to market.

IBM got this perfectly right. We can't convert and consolidate the plethora of applications and data to one platform. But what if we could house it physically and manage it logically as one? Doesn't that remove at least a majority of the ills that afflict data center management today? I think it does. Pay very close attention to the enormity of this announcement. For systems management vendors that promise to do the same only through software, IBM wins this one; game over. IBM is the only one that could deliver it this way.

In his definitive article, Christensen continued his explanation of disruption as a "product or service designed for a new set of customers." With zBX, I think he's right. The new set of customers is one that simply needs to finally rein in the unwieldy beast that has been unleashed over the past years. They're mad as hell and aren't going to take it anymore.

That Sums It Up. **ME**

Disruptive Technologyz

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