IBM Offers Solid-State Drives On Power Systems

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IBM (NYSE: IBM) on Thursday said it has added the option of using solid-state drives on its Power Systems servers.

Along with the hardware, IBM also offers software management tools for SSDs. On servers using IBM Power6 processors, the company is offering Data Balancer,software that allows a system administrator to move frequently accessed data to SSDs to provide quicker access. Other data is moved to conventional hard diskdrives.

The two-pronged approach is recognition that companies using SSDs in the data center are also likely to use traditional drives, which are considerably less expensive. The benefit of using SSDs, besides less power consumption and a smaller footprint, is speed. SSDs, which use Flash memory for storage, conduct up to 20,000 data transfers per second, compared with 200 data transfers per second on a hard drive.

Spending a lot more for that level of performance is justified in certain applications, such as airline reservations, ticketing, or stock-trading systems that depend on fast online transaction processing to service customers.

In offering SSDs with Power Systems, IBM expands the use of the technology beyond System x servers and System Storage DS8000 devices. The Power Systems portfolio includes blade servers,database servers, and servers for running business applications and for high-performance computing environments.

In October, IBM introduced the "Express" brand to its midlevel Power Systems, which indicates that the hardware is faster to deploy than enterprise-level servers and contains a number of automated management features to simplify maintenance. The systems include storage and the WebSphere application server.