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<http://www.technewsworld.com/story/nLFc9C76GTuxq2/IBM-Lifts-Lid-on-Cell-Powered-Blade-Servers.xhtml>

Cell may be limited in the datacenter setting, said Gartner Vice President of Research Martin Reynolds, largely because development tools and techniques are still in the early stages. "The general challenge with Cell is figuring out how to program it," he said.

IBM (NYSE: IBM) is trying to prove that its powerful, multi-tasking Cell computer chip is not just about fun and games.

The company, whose Cell chips will be incorporated into the next-generation PlayStation 3 from Cell collaborator Sony (NYSE: SNE), announced this week a new family of blade computing systems -- thin, lightweight servers that consolidate space while bumping up capacity -- incorporating nine-core Cell processing power. The offering marks Big Blue's first Cell-based product and brings to market the industry's first multi-core blade server.

IBM portrayed the Cell blade and the rest of its BladeCenter H servers, including Power-processor blades, as a "processing breakthrough" from IBM Research that could increase capability and bandwidth in thin blade computers.

#### HPC Benefits

The company also highlighted how the Cell-based product could handle compute-intensive workloads and broadband media applications using the same parallel processing capabilities that Cell will employ for richer, more advanced graphics and game play in the Sony PS3.

IBM stressed the business benefits of its blade servers, which are aimed at saving space in the datacenter and handling high-performance computing for less buck.

"With the introduction of the BladeCenter H, IBM has delivered unprecedented system innovation to help clients simplify and improve overcrowded datacenters," said IBM Senior Vice President of IBM Systems and Technology Group Bill Zeitler.

#### Early Stage, High Performance

Cell's capabilities may be attractive to organizations looking for cutting-edge design simulation, rendering or other compute-intensive applications, but the processor's power may be somewhat overwhelming for most corporate users, Gartner Vice President of Research Martin Reynolds told TechNewsWorld.

"Frankly, I think it's really too new for people to deploy in large volumes," Reynolds said. "We probably aren't going to see it in business use. It will be limited to scientific and technical fields. It's not an easy system to use."

Cell may be limited in the datacenter setting though, largely because development tools and techniques are still in the early stages, he said. "The general challenge with Cell is figuring out how to program it."

Reynolds said even PS3 game development for Cell will take some time, perhaps through the lifecycle of the first Cell-based console.

Nevertheless, the new BladeCenter H family from IBM does demonstrate how blade infrastructure allows the joining of disparate resources, such as Cell and Power-based servers, Reynolds added.

#### Importance of Power

The Cell-based blade shows IBM is serious about finding other applications for the chip beyond gaming, Semico Chief of Technology Tony Massimini told TechNewsWorld.

He said the new Cell blade, which IBM demonstrated at the 2005 International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, largely retains the architecture of its Power chips, which are "very important to their server line."

Although IBM was not specific on other initial customers, the company itself is building Cell into IBM systems, and may be hoping to re-invigorate its Power architecture through Cell, Massimini added.

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