

IBM IN CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTECH: Computer Guidance is built on IBM Corp., (www.ibm.com, Armonk, N.Y.), technology, and in the construction space it seems as though this technology is getting a bad rap—people saying it is too costly or just isn't as efficient as some of the alternative technologies. How do you address these statements?

KIRK: While some firms prefer specific technologies (platforms) due to their familiarity, in today's marketplace, the solution is by far the dominant reason companies select a particular system.

Despite this fact, there are perceptions that people have about the IBM platform that give them pause when evaluating potential solutions. One perception is that IBM is old technology. It is true IBM AS/400 came out 20 years ago; however, the latest version, Power System i, has been improved upon with new enhancement releases every one to two years.

Another perception is that the IBM technology is too expensive. Yet one of the lowest systems, the IBM Express 520 series, starts at \$7,995. Of course as requirements grow, the cost of the system elevates as well.

But this same platform is uniquely scalable for multiple users, so it provides a nice entry point for growing firms. In fact, over its lifetime, the total cost of ownership for

the IBM system is much less, requiring minimal administration.

We also hear people say the technology is too complex to maintain. The analyst firm IDC, (www.idc.com, Framingham, Mass.) conducts an annual survey and they highly regard the IBM system, citing the flexibility of multiple operations systems that can run on it, the storage capabilities, reliability, and uptime.

IT (information technology) does not need to spend its resources managing the System i because there is one server that can run hundreds of thousands of users rather than a farm of Windows servers, which is a much more complex and costly proposition.

CONSTRUCTECH: You mentioned things like virtualization and storage, which are all hot topics these days. Given the way technology is migrating, do you believe this makes the IBM platform increasingly attractive in the construction industry?

KIRK: IBM also offers virtualization capability called PowerVM; it is tied to a processor, allowing users to link an unlimited number of virtual systems that will be managed by a single hardware platform.



Roger Kirk, president and CEO, Computer Guidance Corp., (www.computerguidance.com, Scottsdale, Ariz.), tries to debunk some of the myths related to IBM Corp., (www.ibm.com, Armonk, N.Y.), technology in the construction industry, and talks about the future direction of Computer Guidance and its Web-based technology in 2009, including the release of an enhanced reporting portal.

Multiple operating systems can run on it, offering high availability and disaster recovery.

Computer Guidance provides a virtual system, with users able to connect via the latest Internet technology, iCluster, which synchronizes data into our Level IV data center. Every customer, who elects disaster recovery/high availability, is put on the system in a virtual environment that is 100% secure and redundant. It is like having their own server, own operating system, security, and data center, without the expense of acquiring and maintaining the equipment.

With IBM, the integrated middleware for business processes is very beneficial as well. Using this technology, Web services, database, security, virtualization, application server

using IBM WebSphere, and integrated SQL are all built within the server from a single vendor.

We think this (integrated middleware) is a huge advantage because the same standards are being developed for every customer running the Computer Guidance application.

CONSTRUCTECH: Would you say it has become a situation where commercial contractors just aren't familiar with the IBM platform and what it can do?

KIRK: There is undoubtedly a greater familiarity with SQL Server and Oracle than DB2. Yet it turns out that while Oracle is number one in terms of revenue, IBM is the leader in the number of seats. Computer Guidance and IBM in the coming months will be doing more to educate the industry on the benefits of the technology. We are working with IBM personnel on a technology

roadmap for certain development strategies and SOA (service oriented architecture) initiatives and are planning some exciting things with the technology. We intend to get the word out about IBM capabilities and advantages, opening up candid discussions about things like DB2, SOA, Web services, etc.

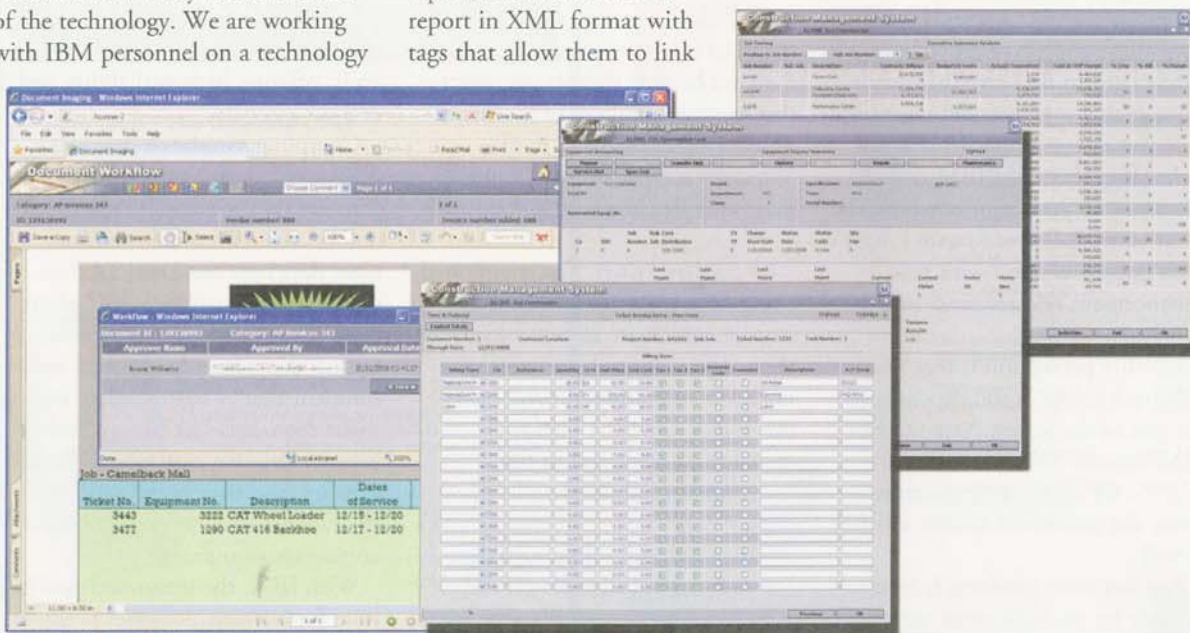
CONSTRUCTECH: You mention that you have some exciting things in store; what can customers expect in terms of new functionality or application sets?

KIRK: In early 2009 we will be releasing an enhanced reporting, beyond a dashboard, Portal Out of Box (POB) tool. In particular, we are using XML (extensible markup language) for all forms management.

Rather than generating a simple report, users will have the report in XML format with tags that allow them to link

to Jasper, Crystal Reports, or Excel for reporting purposes. Our forms package (eForms) has been well received by customers because it enables them to create forms in a Word document that can be formatted and stored by location, customer, or job. Now, with enhanced reporting, the XML technology can link forms to whatever reporting application makes the most sense for individual users.

We will also be launching a Web portal where customers can run our system and link to other third-party applications, as long as those applications are Web-based. (The Computer Guidance POB) with all of a company's indicators will be pushing data down to the portal, enabling users to establish specific alerts for financial conditions, productivity, or other indicators. •



With the ongoing development of virtualization capabilities and improved storage in IBM platforms, applications running on IBM, such as those from Computer Guidance, allow contractors to put a disaster recovery plan in place. In the coming year, contractors can look for a new reporting portal from Computer Guidance.