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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations

Posted by [Jean H.](#) on Tue, 08 May 2007 15:58:17 GMT

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Mirko wrote:

> Good morning group,

>

> I am buying my next linux workstation, and other than dollars, are  
> there other parameters that I should take into account? My main  
> unknown is vendor. Our company likes Dell very much, but I wonder  
> whether HP or IBM machines are better engineered or built for  
> scientific computations.

hum... Dell... we have nothing but problems with them... every computer  
we have (a dozen) had some problems within 2 years of purchase  
(motherboard, fan, memory etc) and the service is worst than bad (in  
Canada at least)....

> I am looking for a 64-bit dual processor (dual or quad core) with  
> about 8GB. I will be running Fluent (and IDL) on it, and Fluent can  
> take advantage of parallelized architectures. So far I have never  
> looked into IDL's features for running on parallel machines.

>

> Thanks,

>

> Mirko

If you find the "perfect computer", please post it here.... our lab is  
looking for buying this kind of beast now...

Jean

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations

Posted by [Christopher Thom](#) on Tue, 08 May 2007 19:17:25 GMT

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Quoth Jean H.:

>> I am buying my next linux workstation, and other than dollars, are  
>> there other parameters that I should take into account? My main  
>> unknown is vendor. Our company likes Dell very much, but I wonder  
>> whether HP or IBM machines are better engineered or built for  
>> scientific computations.

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> hum... Dell... we have nothing but problems with them... every computer  
> we have (a dozen) had some problems within 2 years of purchase  
> (motherboard, fan, memory etc) and the service is worst than bad (in

> Canada at least)....

I would second that. I have had only terrible experiences with dell tech support, both in the US and australia. They actually actively hindered me from solving technical problems created by their cutting corners on hardware.

They do often come out as the cheapest option...but do your homework carefully, down to the chipset level at least. It may just have been a confluence of unlucky circumstances for me, but i swore off buying their computers. YMMV.

cheers  
chris

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Tue, 08 May 2007 19:35:23 GMT  
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Christopher Thom writes:

> I would second that. I have had only terrible experiences with dell tech  
> support, both in the US and australia. They actually actively hindered me  
> from solving technical problems created by their cutting corners on  
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> carefully, down to the chipset level at least. It may just have been a  
> confluence of unlucky circumstances for me, but i swore off buying their  
> computers. YMMV.

Just another data point. I \*always\* buy DELL computers (for myself as well as for the college students in the family) and we have never been disappointed with them in any way. I've always found their service, when I've needed it, to be fantastic.

Now HP. There's a company I won't buy anything from unless I absolutely have to. :-(

Cheers,

David

P.S. I guess everyone uses bodies in India for customer service, but if I have to have one more bone-headed conversation with an HP service technician I'm sure I'll

give up computing forever. Can't they PLEASE just listen to the customer instead of going through each step of their damn script every friggin' time I call!

And in the end, it's always "and then get into the guts of your operating system and tear this little thing out". Uh, sorry, I don't think so. :-(

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations

Posted by [Jeff N.](#) on Tue, 08 May 2007 21:02:54 GMT

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> Just another data point. I \*always\* buy DELL computers (for  
> myself as well as for the college students in the family) and  
> we have never been disappointed with them in any way. I've  
> always found their service, when I've needed it, to be  
> fantastic.

I'll second this :) I've never had problems with any of the several Dell machines I've bought, or the dozens that I've administered, except for one faulty laptop monitor that was quickly remedied.

So I guess the score is:

	For	Against
Dell:	2	2
HP:	0	1

That tally doesn't look like a lot of help :(

Jeff

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 08 May 2007 21:35:03 GMT

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On Tue, 08 May 2007 06:47:50 -0700, Mirko wrote:

> Good morning group,  
>  
> I am buying my next linux workstation, and other than dollars, are there  
> other parameters that I should take into account? My main unknown is  
> vendor. Our company likes Dell very much, but I wonder whether HP or IBM  
> machines are better engineered or built for scientific computations.  
>  
> I am looking for a 64-bit dual processor (dual or quad core) with about  
> 8GB. I will be running Fluent (and IDL) on it, and Fluent can take  
> advantage of parallelized architectures. So far I have never looked into  
> IDL's features for running on parallel machines.

I'd skip the big names and try a linux-specific workstation provider like ASL labs. Tested and guaranteed linux hardware compatibility (especially important for video cards), and pre-installation of any of a dozen Linux distributions. And for the high end, pretty affordable too. For ~2k you can get a quad core Intel chip @2.4GHz, 4GB, 1.5GB HD, and a fast NVidia card.

JD

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [Mirko](#) on Wed, 09 May 2007 15:00:57 GMT  
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On May 8, 5:35 pm, JD Smith <jdsm...@as.arizona.edu> wrote:

> On Tue, 08 May 2007 06:47:50 -0700, Mirko wrote:  
>> Good morning group,  
>  
>> I am buying my next linux workstation, and other than dollars, are there  
>> other parameters that I should take into account? My main unknown is  
>> vendor. Our company likes Dell very much, but I wonder whether HP or IBM  
>> machines are better engineered or built for scientific computations.  
>  
>> I am looking for a 64-bit dual processor (dual or quad core) with about  
>> 8GB. I will be running Fluent (and IDL) on it, and Fluent can take  
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>> IDL's features for running on parallel machines.  
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> like ASL labs. Tested and guaranteed linux hardware compatibility  
> (especially important for video cards), and pre-installation of any of  
> a dozen Linux distributions. And for the high end, pretty affordable  
> too. For ~2k you can get a quad core Intel chip @2.4GHz, 4GB, 1.5GB  
> HD, and a fast NVidia card.  
>  
> JD

Thank you to you all.

I don't think I can be an expert for chipsets.

I went to the Scientific Computing magazine, as they give annual awards, but that list was not very enlightening.

I will take a look at linux-specific vendors.

As for my data point, I have been using Dell's here at work (dual processor workstation and a beefy laptop). We do not seem to have much problems. Here and there, things go wrong, but our IT staff gets them fixed pretty quickly. Our company buys preferentially from Dell - they have some kind of a deal with them.

It is interesting that there were no mention of Sun or IBM machines so far.

Mirko

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Wed, 09 May 2007 15:07:12 GMT  
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Mirko writes:

> It is interesting that there were no mention of Sun or IBM machines

Yeah, or VAX/VMS either. ;-)

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.  
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.  
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>  
Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [Christopher Thom](#) on Wed, 09 May 2007 15:25:22 GMT  
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Quoth David Fanning:

> Mirko writes:

>

>> It is interesting that there were no mention of Sun or IBM machines

>

> Yeah, or VAX/VMS either. ;-)

\*shudder\* The last time I used a VAX, I crashed it at 2am and had no way to control the telescope I was using, and no support except for 7 ring binders of the VMS Users Guide (or whatever). That exciting little adventure leads me to recommend against using them, though of course I may be somewhat biased. :-)

cheers

chris

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Wed, 09 May 2007 16:44:55 GMT

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On Tue, 08 May 2007 14:35:03 -0700, JD Smith wrote:

> can get a quad core Intel chip @2.4GHz, 4GB, 1.5GB HD, and a fast NVidia

1.5 GB -> 1.5 TB

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [Mike\[2\]](#) on Wed, 09 May 2007 20:48:19 GMT

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On May 8, 5:35 pm, JD Smith <jdsm...@as.arizona.edu> wrote:

> I'd skip the big names and try a linux-specific workstation provider

> like ASL labs.

Do you mean ASL Labs (<http://www.asllabs.net>) or ASL, Inc. (<http://www.aslab.com>)?

Mike

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [George N. White III](#) on Thu, 10 May 2007 21:16:36 GMT

On Tue, 8 May 2007, David Fanning wrote:

- > Just another data point. I \*always\* buy DELL computers (for
- > myself as well as for the college students in the family) and
- > we have never been disappointed with them in any way. I've
- > always found their service, when I've needed it, to be
- > fantastic.
- >
- > Now HP. There's a company I won't buy anything from unless
- > I absolutely have to. :-(

Dell is almost 3 different companies, depending on whether you are a small business or individual or a large organization, buying servers or desktops, etc.

We have a bunch of Dell Optiplex P-III machines that won't die. Recently purchased Dells (Optiplex GX-260 -- GX-270) were delivered with parts missing, and have failed early and often. Getting replacement parts has been a struggle (wrong parts shipped, paperwork messed up, etc.).

I read that some large companies are now asking for 4-year warranties because some many systems fail at 3 years + epsilon.

--

George N. White III <aa056@chebucto.ns.ca>

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Subject: Re: OT: recommendations for high preformance workstations  
Posted by [Andrew Cool](#) on Tue, 22 May 2007 23:51:35 GMT  
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On May 10, 12:07 am, David Fanning <n...@dfanning.com> wrote:

- > Mirko writes:
- >> It is interesting that there were no mention of Sun or IBM machines
- >
- > Yeah, or VAX/VMS either. ;-)
- >
- > Cheers,
- >
- > David
- >
- > --
- > David Fanning, Ph.D.
- > Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
- > Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming:<http://www.dfanning.com/>
- > Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

David,

Last I heard there are still satellites whiizing around above your head running VMS on board.  
(perhaps Wayne can confirm or deny that/)

Good reason to have faith in VMS reliability... ;-)

Our systems people say that when our Alpha/AXP boxes die, they won't be replaced. Trouble is, they're not dying - they just keep plugging away!

Cheers,

Andrew

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