

## 2010-11 Unix Survey: IBM Tops in Performance

The Vendor Face-Off section is a major part of our **2010-11 GCG Unix Vendor Preference Survey**. This is where we ask real-world data center personnel (306 of them this year) to judge the major Unix system vendors (HP, IBM and Oracle) on a wide variety of technical, vendor support, and customer satisfaction criteria.

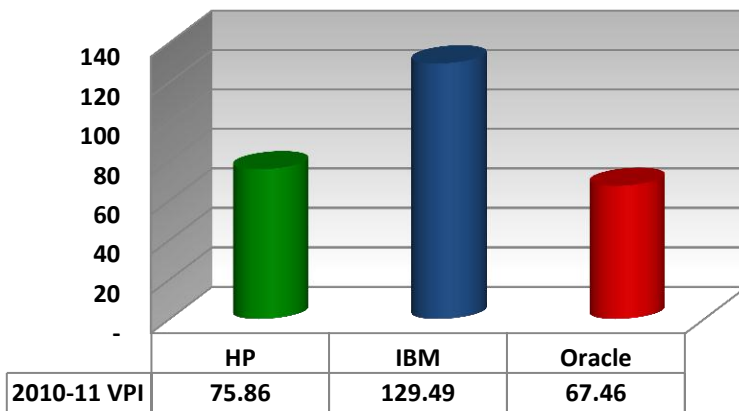
Vendors are rated in terms of their VPI score – a simple normalization technique we use to ensure that results aren't skewed. (For more details on the survey and methodology, click [here](#).) In simple terms, a VPI score of 100 is 'par'. Scores above 100 are good, and scores less than 100 – well, they're not so good.

It's also important to point out that there isn't an overall 'winner' or 'loser' in these surveys. We ask many questions and cover a wide range of topics, some of which are more important to particular customers than to others. For example, some customers would value manageability more highly than performance, while others want high availability most of all.

The Unix system market is highly competitive; vendors push hard to differentiate their offerings on technical, management, service, and customer experience criteria. We see the results of these efforts in the Vendor Face-Off section of our surveys. Customers compare the major vendors on various factors and let us know who's on top, who's trailing, or if they simply don't see much difference between them.

The topic today is performance, and we're looking at it from several different angles. First up is what we call 'Raw System Performance,' where we're asking customers which system brand they believe offers the highest performance...

Raw system performance (benchmarks, etc.)

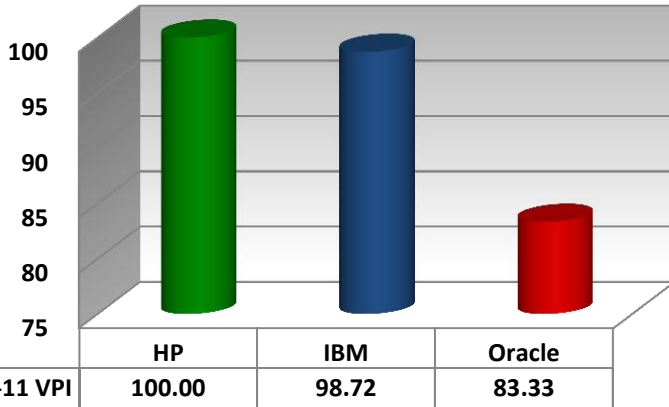


IBM, with their Power line of Unix systems, has owned this category for the last five years. While the margin of victory has varied over time, they've stayed on top. This year, their VPI of 130 almost doubles Oracle's 67 and comfortably beats HP's 76.

Of the three vendors, IBM seems to focus more on providing raw performance and proving it via benchmarks and other demonstrations. IBM is also the only vendor of the three to have much of a non-x86 presence in supercomputing.

In our 'Observed Performance' category, we're asking our respondents which Unix brand performs best in their data centers on their applications....

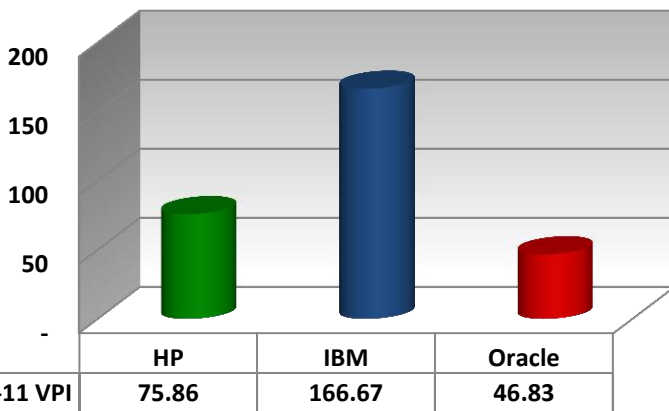
**Observed Performance (Real World)**



This is essentially a tie between IBM and HP, with Oracle trailing. Historically, IBM and HP have swapped the lead in this area; HP has won the last couple of years.

We believe that the tighter scores this year are due to recent hardware refreshes from both vendors making an impact in the field. Systems fueled by IBM's POWER 7 and HP's Tukwila Itanium processors have bumped up performance significantly. Oracle introduced their Exadata 2 system, but there weren't enough of them in the field to make much difference.

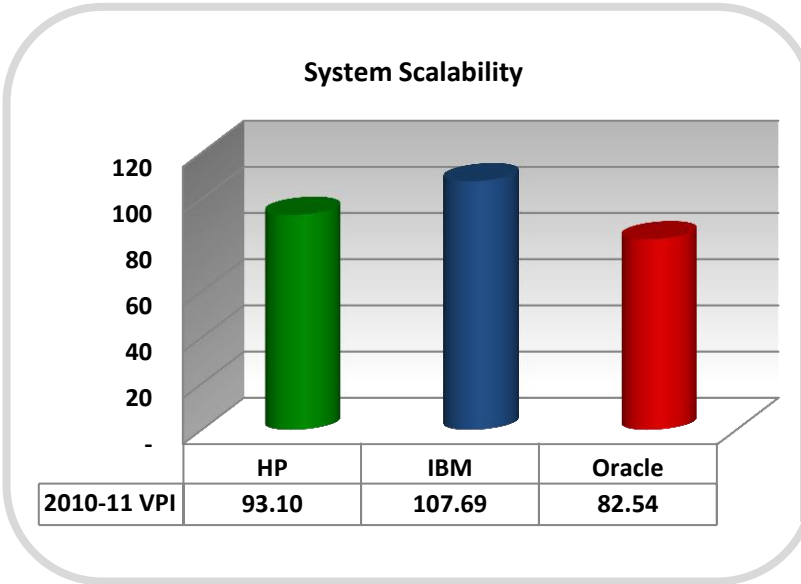
**Processor Performance**



IBM has outright dominated this category for the last five years. According to customers, Oracle's SPARC and HP's Intel-fabbed Itanium processor don't really come close to matching what IBM has with their POWER line.

It's not hard to see why customers voted this way – IBM's POWER processors typically top all comers in terms of feeds/speeds and throughput potential on both integer and floating point workloads.

Performance is more than fast processors and record benchmark scores; it's also about size. When you consider that these systems typically run very large, vertically-scaling applications and benchmarks, it's important that these systems support an o/s instance large enough to handle the load...



IBM Power systems have taken this category in four out of the last five years. This year, they again top both HP and Oracle by a comfortable margin.

While HP and Oracle have had systems with the same (or even more) processor sockets at various times, IBM's Power systems usually come out on top in terms of application throughput due to the strength of their POWER processor and interconnect technology.

Unix users have selected IBM as the Unix performance leader again and again in these surveys. IBM has certainly played the performance card time and time again with successive POWER processors and accompanying system introductions – and scored a number of benchmark records along the way. If a deal comes down to sheer performance, IBM's Power line is difficult for anyone to beat.

But performance isn't the only yardstick customers use to evaluate commercial Unix systems. Stability and availability, operating system features, and support all play a role. We've asked our enterprise Unix-using respondents about all of these factors (plus more). If you're interested in seeing these results, [check here](#). Also, feel free to contact us about historical data, detailed GCG analysis, and other survey deliverables.

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