

## 2010-11 Unix Survey: O/S Quality, Security, Maintenance

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

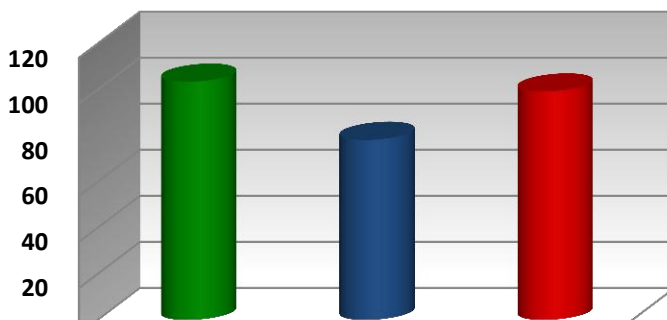
Vendors are rated in terms of their VPI score – a simple normalization technique we use to ensure that results aren't skewed. (For more details on the survey and methodology, click [here](#).) In simple terms, a VPI score of 100 is 'par'. Scores above 100 are good, and scores less than 100 – well, they're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

A key differentiator between commercial Unix brands – perhaps THE key differentiator – is the operating system. While they all support the same standards, they vary in a lot of ways too. They're closely integrated with their associated systems and are the single most important factor in providing the 'goodness' that sets these systems apart in terms of performance, scalability, availability, and manageability. Because of this we ask a number of o/s related questions in our Unix survey, beginning with...

Operating System Quality

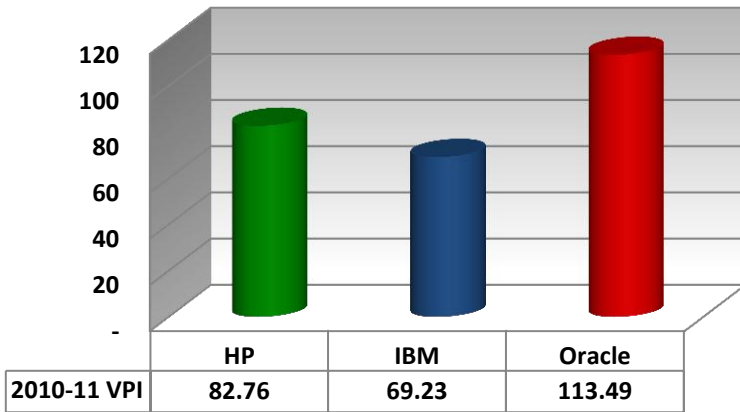


	HP	IBM	Oracle
2010-11 VPI	103.45	78.21	99.21

O/S quality is highly important to our commercial Unix customers. It's a general question that covers a lot of ground: how well is the o/s put together? How easy is it to install? Is dealing with it a delight or a hassle?

HP's HP-UX o/s has scored well on this category over the last two years. Typically, we've seen all three Unix variants bunched closer together, but AIX slipped a few points in this edition of the survey. It's interesting to note that only 5% of our respondents said "Not Sure" or "No Difference" – showing almost no ambivalence on this issue.

### Operating System Features

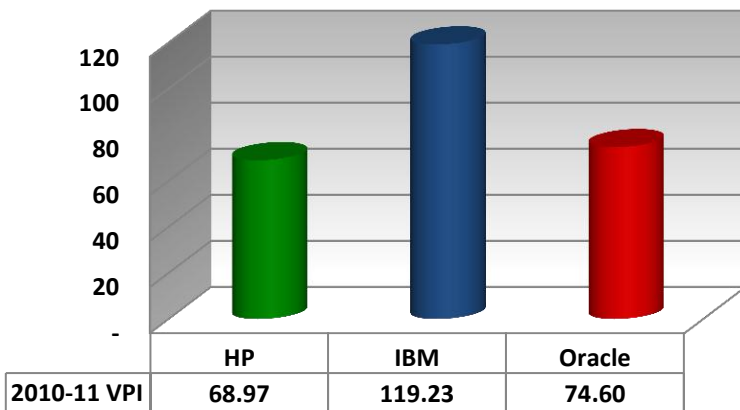


This is Oracle's biggest win on the survey, as customers ranked Solaris above both AIX and HP-UX in terms of the feature set it brings to the table. This is the first time Oracle has taken this category. Both HP and IBM dropped significantly from previous years' results on this question.

It's a good result for Oracle and shows that customers see quite a bit of value in Solaris, despite Oracle's less-than-stellar performance on other parts of the survey.

We delve into some more specific o/s attributes in this next set of questions. First, we're asking which vendor has the best virtualization implementation; then we touch on security; and then we close out this section with two questions on o/s maintenance.

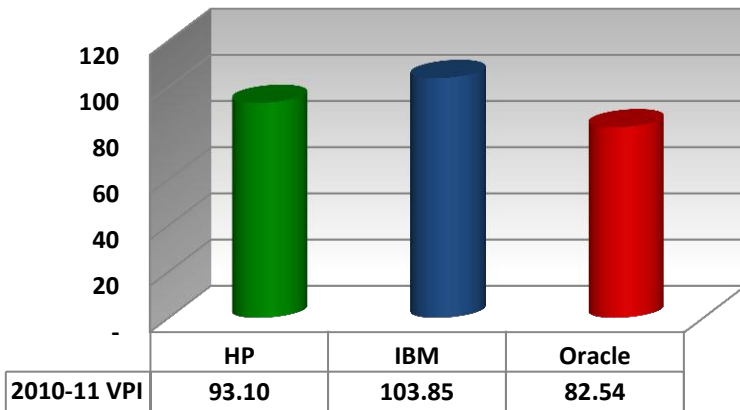
### Partitioning & Virtualization Features



Virtualization has been a focus for IBM's Power system organization since the early 2000s. IBM has won this category for the last four years; this year's result has put some distance between themselves and HP/Oracle.

IBM has done a solid job on the technical and marketing fronts with Unix virtualization. They have both virtual machine and o/s virtualization features built into AIX and were the first vendor to offer live partition mobility on a commercial Unix distribution. They've completely baked virtualization into their Power value proposition from a marketing perspective.

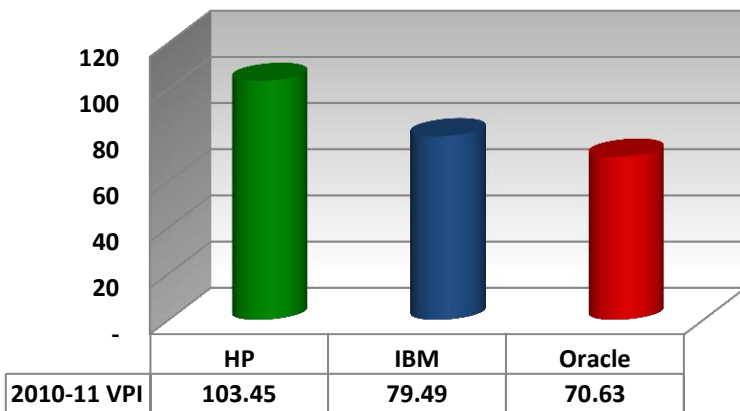
### Overall O/S & Hardware Security Features



Security is highly important, as witnessed by the almost daily headlines outlining hacks into commercial and governmental organizations. But we don't hear a lot about exploits of holes in commercial Unix operating systems.

IBM takes this category by a solid margin over HP and a wider margin vs. Oracle's Solaris o/s. We don't believe this means that any of these operating systems are less secure than the others; it's more that customers perhaps perceive that the security mechanisms are a bit more configurable or robust in IBM's AIX.

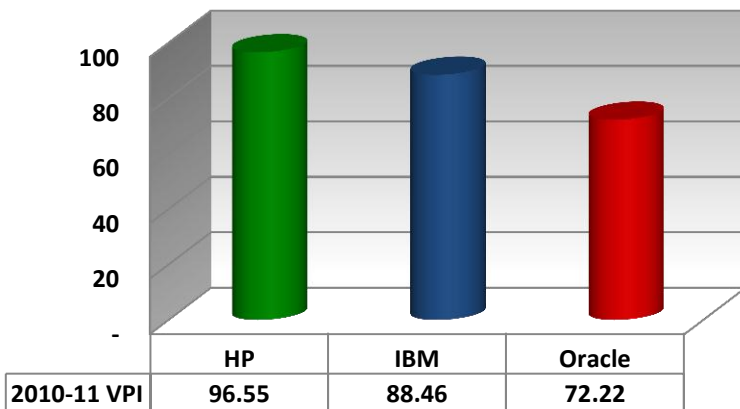
### O/S Patches, Updates: Timely & Stable



Operating system maintenance updates should be like high quality houseguests: they need to arrive on time and not cause any problems.

This is the first year we've asked this question, and we were a little surprised to see this wide a spread between the leading and lagging vendors. HP's solid margin shows that their attention to detail on the update process has paid off. But we did have a significant portion (22%) say either that they're not sure or don't see any difference between vendors.

### O/S Patches, Updates: Non-disruptive & easy to apply



This question is about the patching process, not the patches themselves. Do the o/s updating mechanisms work well? Or do they cause mass confusion and despair?

We had 20% of our respondents say they aren't sure or that there isn't any difference between vendors on the quality of their patch processes. With those who did have an opinion, HP was on top, with IBM fairly close behind. Oracle trails with a distant third-place showing.

In the operating system portion of this edition of the survey, there's a little something for everyone. HP wins on overall o/s quality and maintenance issues while Oracle takes the crown in o/s features. IBM continues their domination of the virtualization category.

In a lot of ways, the differences between commercial Unix operating systems are like the variations you see in luxury cars. All of the cars will get you down the road; they all have nice audio systems and satellite navigation. The differences are in the way the features are put together and how they're used. So while a BMW owner will acknowledge that a Lexus or Infiniti is an actual automobile, he/she may argue that these other brands aren't really choices worthy of consideration when compared to a Bimmer.

We see the same reasoning, dressed up in more technical garb, when looking at Unix operating systems. This isn't to say that they don't leapfrog each other in terms of features or performance – they do. But that doesn't mean that any one o/s is truly the "best for all time..."

If you're interested in finding out more about this survey (demographics, expanded results, detailed GCG analysis), click [here](#).



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