

## Survey: Sales, the Field, Promise Keeping?

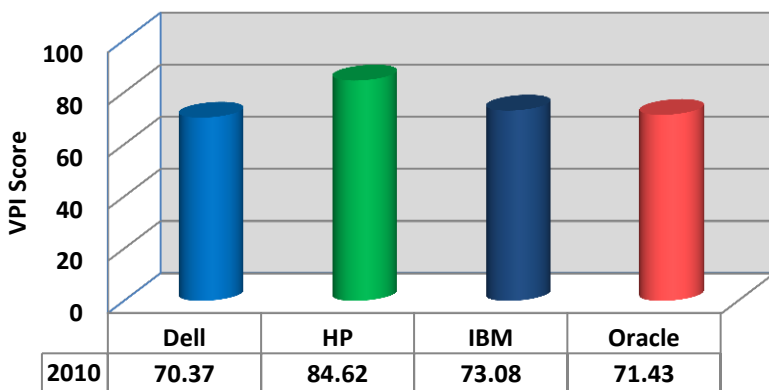
A major part of the **2010 GCG x86 Server Vendor Preference** survey is the Vendor Face-Off section. This is where we ask real-world data center personnel to rate the major x86 server vendors (Dell, HP, IBM, and Oracle) on a wide variety of technical, vendor support, and customer satisfaction criteria.

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 a lot of 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. Are all x86 servers alike on these characteristics? According to the people who purchase, manage, and rely on them day-to-day, the answer is a resounding "No!"

The topic de jour for this update is sales and sales channels. In our effort to be comprehensive, we asked our survey respondents how they felt about both the direct and indirect sales forces deployed by the major x86 system vendors. What we were trying to find out was whether the way a vendor manages their sales efforts is an advantage or a disadvantage in the minds of customers. Here's what we found...

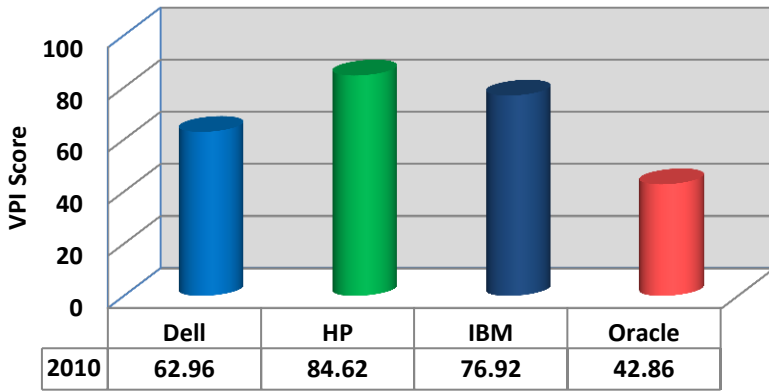
Best Direct Sales



Most customers purchase x86 systems indirectly, rather than directly through the vendor. However, every vendor does have some sort of direct sales option via the web.

In our 2010 survey, customers didn't see a lot of difference between the direct sales forces of the major vendors. While HP won this category, a significant percentage of respondents chose the "Not Sure/No Difference" option. Since the vast majority of x86 systems are sold via 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, most customers don't see direct vendor sales people very often.

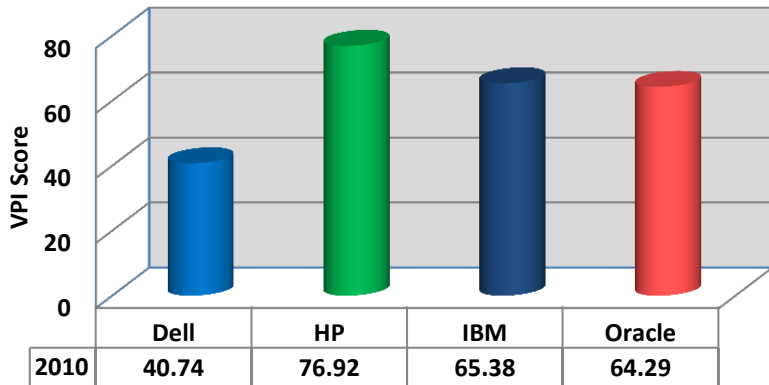
### Best Channel Organization



We see somewhat different results when we ask about channel organizations. HP has owned this category for the last few years – which isn't a surprise, given their strong channel presence.

Dell improved their score vs. 2009, while IBM's scores dropped off. However, Oracle took quite a dive over the past year – their score dropped by 50%. This is certainly due to changes made since their purchase of Sun. Still, there were a lot (almost 40%) of customers who didn't see much difference between the channel organizations.

### Keeps Their Promises



This question is an open-ended, catch-all query designed to get at a variety of sales-related issues. As the chart shows, customers see HP as the vendor that best keeps their sales promises. Sun (pre-Oracle) won this category last year and in 2008 as well, but their score dropped quite a bit in 2010.

We had the largest percentage of "Not Sure/No Difference Between Vendors" responses on this question – slightly over half.

Our respondents this year are either a very trusting or very cynical lot. On many of the vendor support-related questions (like these sales questions), they answered "Not Sure" or "No Difference Between Vendors" in larger numbers than we've seen in past surveys. This could mean that all the vendors are doing a better job on these issues, or it could mean that they're all doing an equally poor job. It could also be customers saying, "A pox on all of their houses" during a difficult economic time that must be both frightening and frustrating.

**Gabriel**  
CONSULTING GROUP

[www.GabrielConsultingGroup.com](http://www.GabrielConsultingGroup.com)  
[gcginfo@GabrielConsultingGroup.com](mailto:gcginfo@GabrielConsultingGroup.com)

(503) 372-9389