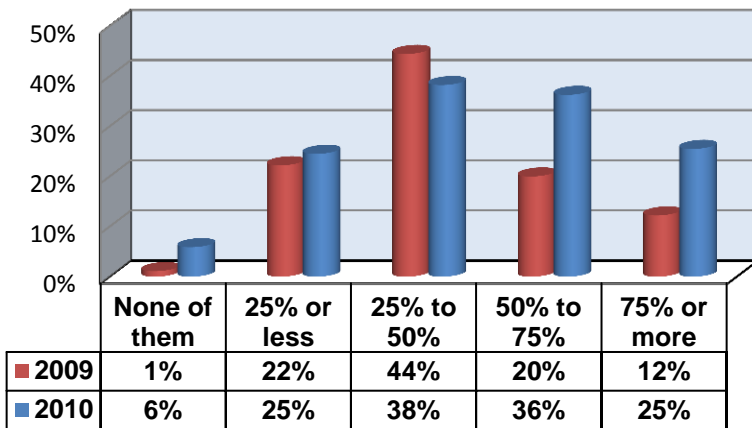# Gabriel CONSULTING GROUP

2010 Survey: Surge in Mission-Critical x86

Servers based on the Intel/AMD x86 chip architecture have been a part of data centers big and small for more than 15 years. At first, they were relegated to non-vital roles, and mostly purchased because (as one IT manager told me back in the day) "Hey, we want good stuff, but this is all we can afford." My, my, how things have changed…

Today, x86 systems running both Windows and Linux are vital players in almost every data center. Rising performance, RAS, and operating system quality – coupled with strong price/performance – have made the x86 platform a valid host for truly mission-critical applications.

In our **2010 GCG x86 Server Vendor Preference Survey** ([details here](#)), we asked our survey respondents to tell us the degree to which they are using their x86 platforms for vital applications and their future plans….
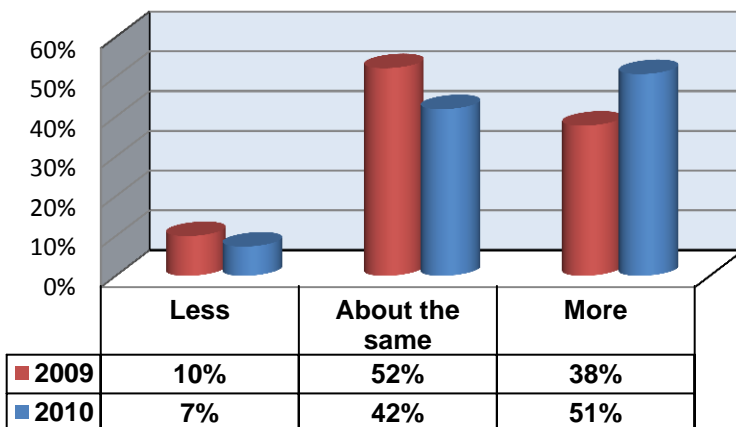
"How many of your x86 workloads are mission critical?"

	None of them	25% or less	25% to 50%	50% to 75%	75% or more
2009	1%	22%	44%	20%	12%
2010	6%	25%	38%	36%	25%

More than 60% of the enterprise customers we surveyed said that more than half of their x86 workloads are mission-critical. This is a significant increase over what we found in 2009 on the same question – almost double, in fact.

Some of this can be explained by differences in the survey sample; the proportion of SMB to large enterprises is a bit higher this year. But we are also definitely seeing x86 platforms being used for vital processing in organizations of all sizes.

"Will your x86 platforms be hosting more, or less, mission critical apps in the near future?"

	Less	About the same	More
2009	10%	52%	38%
2010	7%	42%	51%

We also see a large increase in the numbers of customers who are putting more mission-critical workloads onto their x86 infrastructure. More than half of these customers say that their mission-critical x86 use will increase in the coming year, while just a tiny number (7%) see it declining.

The results were similar last year, but the trend has definitely strengthened in 2010, even after allowing for the difference in customer enterprise size.

It's undeniable that the x86 platform has moved from an edge-of-network box to a viable mission-critical server choice. This isn't unanticipated – these systems have shown solid improvements in every generation. Some customers see these platforms as reasonable substitutes for larger and more sophisticated Unix and even mainframe systems. Today, that's probably a bit ambitious for a variety of reasons, but it's clear that enterprise x86 is a substantial threat to traditional Unix and mainframe systems.

Another set of questions asks these same customers which operating environment (Windows vs. Linux vs. Solaris x64) they're using now and their plans for the future. You can see those results in this document.

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

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