

## EMERGING TECH

# New UnixWare release features Webtop

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The key feature of Santa Cruz Operation Inc.'s UnixWare 7.1 is its new integrated Webtop, according to the company.

It is based on SCO's Tarantella technology, a server-based software product designed to allow users to access applications in a cross-platform computing environment using the Web.

"We've actually taken components of Tarantella and built them into UnixWare," said Mike Foster, SCO's director of corporate communications in Santa Cruz, Calif.

"The reason we did that is quite important — you get the direct benefit of a lot of the attributes Tarantella has in terms of use of any client, any browser-based interface into the system, and the revitalization of applications."

The Webtop gives users access to server-based applications from any Java-enabled browser or Java workstation, as well as from all the client devices already supported by UnixWare systems. Applications don't have to be modified and will appear in the browser unchanged, according to SCO. Character-based applications can be delivered in a graphical environment without modification on the back end, and SCO also said the Webtop can remove the need for terminal emulators and proprietary client systems.

Adding users to the network, controlling application access for users and administering the server can be done through a browser, giving administrators the ability to manage their entire business network from almost any location.

Tony Iams, senior analyst at D.H. Brown & Associates in Port Chester, N.Y., calls the Webtop "another thin client play."

"It's a way to minimize the complexity of the client and offload administrative responsibility to the server," he said. "We've been hearing about this for several years now — there are a lot of different approaches, and this is just another one."

The advantage to this one, he said, is that it minimizes the barriers to thin-client computing for existing infrastructures so there really isn't any redesign required — you can continue to use the applications you have.

"Whether they're character-based applications or X/Windows applications or Java-based applications, they can all be supported by this model, whereas other environments might require you to rewrite stuff in Java," he said.

"One of the problems we've encountered with the Unix vs. NT question, quite honestly, is the graphical interface to the user at the server," explained John Huffman, chief technology officer for ACR Systems Inc. in Jacksonville, Fla. "This pretty well takes care of that."

While he doesn't have the Webtop installed yet, he is satisfied it's going to work as well as he hopes.

“We think it’s the way to go,” he said.

“We’re tending toward a Web-based approach to all our software anyway, so that fits exactly right in.”

UnixWare 7.1 includes the newly announced Business Edition — a new configuration for the small- to medium-sized business market — as well as another new configuration, the Data Center Edition. These configurations, along with the remaining updates to UnixWare 7 editions such as the Departmental Edition, Enterprise Edition, Messaging Edition and Base Edition, were expected to begin shipping on March 19.

Besides the Webtop, SCO boasts several other improvements in 7.1. It includes a new version of the SCO VisionFS, which is expected to allow improved file and print services between Unix servers and Windows PCs. SCO also has upgraded its automated back-up and restore functionality with ARCserveIT 6.6.

The range of application support has also been extended, so now in addition to all the UnixWare and SCO OpenServer applications, users can now deploy Linux on UnixWare 7 servers.

SCO’s Foster said supporting Linux is a strategic move, adding that rather than being a hindrance to the company, Linux is actually helping SCO by promoting Unix and the knowledge of Unix. He gave the example of students in universities who are learning on the easily available Linux, who will eventually enter the work world with a greater familiarity with Unix-based technologies. And because Linux isn’t always suitable for large enterprises, he said, they may end up choosing another Unix platform such as SCO’s instead of turning to Windows NT.

D.H. Brown’s lams, on the other hand, said he did believe Linux is going to be a major competitor for SCO in the near future, especially since many of SCO’s customers are in the small- and medium-sized business markets. He thinks SCO has a lot of work to do to ward off the competition coming from the growing popularity of Linux.

“The Webtop is fine technology, but that’s only one thing they can do,” he said. “It’s just not clear whether that’s enough — they need to be looking at a lot of different options.”

He doesn’t have an easy answer for what those options should be, but he mentioned forging partnerships as well as defining something that really makes SCO stand out against Linux.

Suggested pricing for upgrades from previous UnixWare 7 configurations to the same configuration in 7.1 is US\$299. The Business Edition has a suggested price of US\$1,399 and the Data Center Edition’s pricing was not announced at press time.

SCO Canada Inc. in Toronto is at 1-800-726-8649 or [www.sco.com](http://www.sco.com).