



SURVEY

Third-Party Maintainers and the Enterprise Datacenter: Still Gaining Ground

Rob Brothers

IDC OPINION

For the past five years, IDC has been tracking enterprises and their propensity to utilize someone other than the vendor to support their datacenter environment. In general, the third-party maintainer (TPM) market is relatively small when compared with the overall support revenue of the largest vendors. The market share of the largest third-party maintainer is only a fraction of a percent when compared with the industry size of approximately \$60 billion. But these support providers supply a valuable resource for customers looking to support their legacy or end-of-life assets until they can refresh their technology, retire an old application, or need a bridge solution during a migration. IDC sees these providers as a valuable viable option for many enterprises, and they should not be overlooked when trying to optimize opex cash flow. IDC observes:

- There has been an increase in the propensity of companies to use a TPM. In 2013, it was 40% of enterprises; then that number increased to 45.5% in 2015.
- When enterprise representatives were asked why they chose a TPM, "better offerings" and "easier to do business with" were the top 2 responses.
- TPMs are supporting slightly more assets in the datacenter than they have since the 2013 study – slightly more than 50% of the assets in 2015 as opposed to slightly less than 50% in 2013.

IN THIS STUDY

This IDC study presents the worldwide attach and pen rates for enterprise x86 systems, highlighting the use of third-party maintainers in datacenter environments. IDC reviews how these service providers are being used as well as why enterprises use them.

Methodology

IDC surveyed 516 enterprise end users worldwide in February 2015 about their propensity to use a third-party maintainer in their datacenter environment. Results showed that 21% of these end users come from the SMB market (1-999 employees), and the remaining 79% are from the enterprise market (1,000+ employees). The countries represented in this survey are as follows:

- United States
- Canada
- Brazil
- United Kingdom
- India
- Australia/New Zealand

Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Legacy applications and siloed infrastructures are still part of many datacenters, and looking for alternative resources to support those datacenters can be a very wise choice when trying to optimize opex cash flow. The reasons to use a TPM can be varied – lower costs, an easier approach to doing business, or better response and support due to the vendor's lack of focus on older systems or the vendors' decision to drop the support of that device altogether. IDC also realizes that as cloud-based computing and the software-defined world begins to come to fruition, the ability to swap out systems, storage, and networking equipment without the worry of the intelligence running on that device will become more of a reality. As workloads obtain the ability to move between systems and datacenters, devices should be able to be swapped in and out of that environment without impeding critical data flow. Hence support at the device level will become very rudimentary – a true box swap. The intelligence will reside in the software running the movement of workloads. These factors should enable a third-party maintainer to be able to provide the base hardware support on devices and leave software support on the "software-defined" aspect of the devices to the vendor.

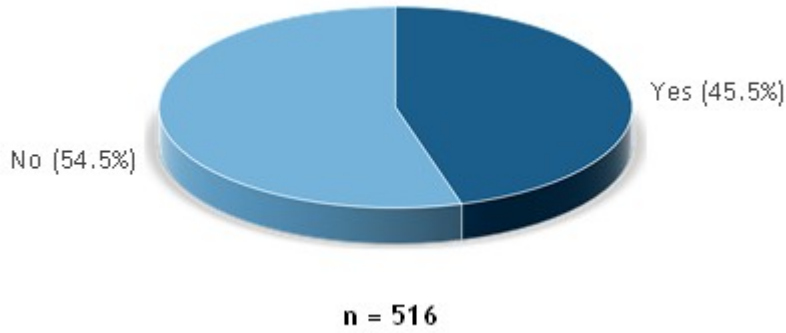
Figures 1-3 reveal the results of a recent IDC study regarding customers' perceptions of TPMs. Figure 1 shows the percentage of enterprises that use a TPM in their datacenter. Figure 2 presents some of the reasons why they chose a TPM – it's interesting to note that cost was not the number 1 reason.

IDC also asked customers what portion of their datacenters are allowed to be handled by a third-party maintainer. We found that it is fairly rare for an enterprise to give 100% of its environment to a TPM, and on average, it's just a little over half. This is an increase over 2013 when it was under 50% (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 1

Use of Third-Party Maintainers to Support Datacenter Assets

Q. Do you use any third-party maintainers for support of your datacenter assets?

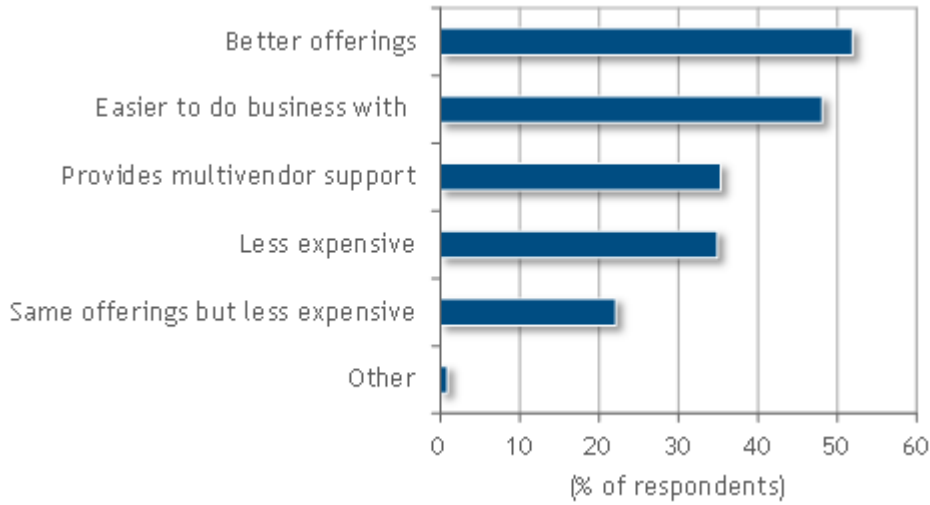


Source: IDC's *Worldwide x86 Server Attach Rate Study*, 2015

FIGURE 2

Reasons to Choose a Third-Party Maintainer

Q. Why did you choose a third-party maintainer?



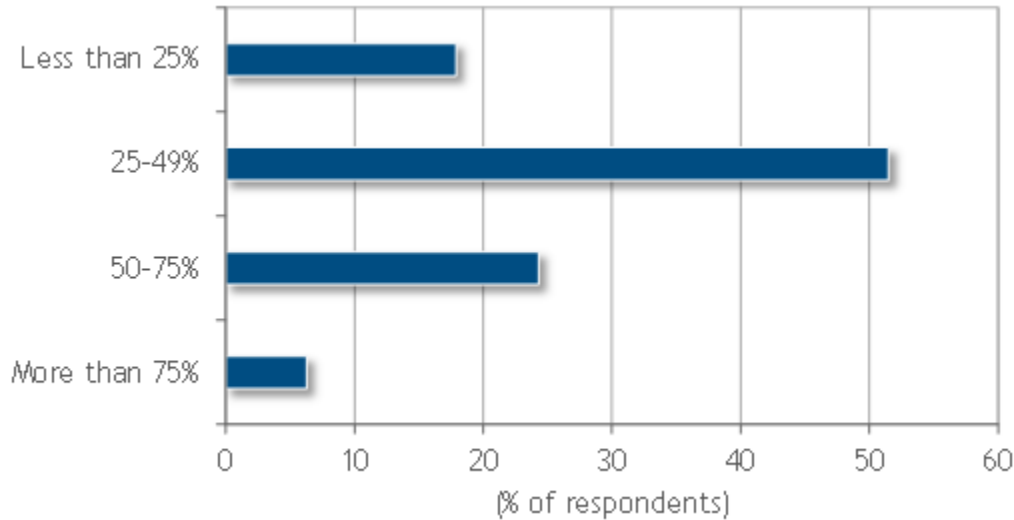
n = 235

Source: IDC's *Worldwide x86 Server Attach Rate Study*, 2015

FIGURE 3

Percentage of Third-Party Maintainer Support

Q. What percentage of your environment does your third-party maintainer support?



n = 235

Source: IDC's *Worldwide x86 Server Attach Rate Study*, 2015

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Third-party maintainers are a very viable alternative for enterprise datacenter support for a myriad of reasons, most of which are discussed throughout this document. With cloud-based initiatives and vendors turning more and more to software-defined solutions, the ability to box swap on a scheduled basis instead of an SLA basis should become more of a reality. This will further the opportunity for TPMs to maintain a broader range of devices.

ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

Enterprises should continue to use third-party maintainers where it makes sense. The key is to scrutinize their abilities and coverage. Companies such as SMS, Curvature, and Akibia that have been in this market a long time are trusted providers of these support services. The success of these providers are based on their ability to deliver, and in this day and age of social media, the ability to hide bad customer experiences without having them known in the industry is waning. Tools and automation to streamline the support experience are a must, and third parties as well as vendors that excel in this space will be successful.

LEARN MORE

Related Research

- *Hyper-Converged Infrastructures – HP Creating Hyper-Operational Efficiencies* (IDC #lcUS25850115, August 2015)
- *Comparing Traditional OEMs Versus ODMs (White-Box Manufacturers): Services Matter!* (IDC #256604, June 2015)
- *LogMeIn Rescue Lens: Let the Camera Do the Talking* (IDC #lcUS25528615, March 2015)
- *Proactive, Predictive, Prescriptive Deskside and Mobile Worker Support* (IDC #lcUS25494715 March 2015)
- *Worldwide Clientless Remote Support Software Forecast 2015-2019* (IDC #253609, January 2015)
- *Set It and Forget It: How Automated Remote Support Can Improve IT Operations* (IDC #253204, December 2014)

Synopsis

This IDC study presents the worldwide attach and pen rates for enterprise x86 systems, highlighting the use of third-party maintainers (TPMs) in datacenter environments. IDC reviews how these service providers are being used as well as why enterprises use them.

"Enterprise customers have made it very clear they will utilize third-party maintainers and not just for cost savings," says Rob Brothers, VP, Software and Hardware Support Services at IDC. "The easy-to-do-business aspect they have eluded to in the survey is surely a compelling differentiator."

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