In a bold move to broaden and strengthen product support for optimizing mainframe costs and improving performance for IBM z Systems workloads, BMC Software and Compuware have announced a partnership to provide integrations for several offerings from the two companies. BMC's Cost Analyzer for zEnterprise (CAZE) and BMC's MainView will integrate with Compuware's Strobe to provide application-aware workload management and cost optimization. The integration enables customers to understand where workloads are consuming resources during peak periods thereby incurring high MLC license costs and then perform deeper analysis to pinpoint inefficiencies. The partnership is being characterized as a "technology partnership" with cooperation between the companies' development teams to build the integration software, which will not be an additional cost item for customers. Each company will still build, maintain, support, and sell its own products — no coordinated selling plans were announced — although substantial cross-selling opportunities should develop given the lack of overlap between the products.

BMC and Compuware (now exclusively a mainframe software company) have both been providing mainframe management software products for decades. Each has products focused on mainframe cost reduction targeted to minimizing IBM Monthly License Charges, which are based on IBM z Systems processor usage, expressed as MSUs. In practice, minimizing MLC license costs comes from a combination of tuning individual applications to reduce application resource consumption and strategic deployment of workloads across LPARs to reduce cross-system peaks and minimize the infamous "peak four-hour rolling average" monthly usage cost. The product combination supports both tuning and workload optimization activities with the ability to monitor and optimize workload deployments with the BMC products and drill down into specific application details with Compuware Strobe.

In terms of specific integration details, the joint company announcement provides the following: "One integration allows BMC Cost Analyzer to call Compuware Strobe for a detailed analysis of the specific application component for peak MLC periods, enabling customers to proactively tune applications that have the greatest impact on their monthly software licensing costs. A second integration with BMC MainView allows customers to either automatically or manually invoke Strobe performance analysis — empowering mainframe staffs to more quickly, efficiently, and consistently perform cost-saving tuning tasks." The companies plan to demonstrate the products and planned integrations at the upcoming SHARE conference during the first week of March.

Certainly, mainframe customers should welcome the announcement and the direction toward a larger consolidated product set with integrated functionality that can provide cost benefits, optimize performance, and leverage IT staff resources. The IBM System z management software market has been largely dominated by a small number of vendors including IBM, CA Technologies, BMC, Compuware, and ASG Software Solutions. The product partnership between BMC and Compuware is intended to provide an alternative to offerings from the largest vendors for customers to consider. Interestingly, according to the announcement, "the integrations are the first of several the two companies plan as part of a broader partnership that also includes use of each other's technology within their own organizations."

Looking ahead, it is important to recognize that both companies are continuing to invest in mainframe products, looking for ways to extend and modernize mainframe platform usability and management as workload volumes increase and staff with mainframe skills are becoming increasingly hard to find. It will be interesting to see how this partnership will continue to evolve in the future, given the advantages of cross-product integration.
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