

A DYNAMIC YEAR OF CHANGE FOR THE MAINFRAME



IBM has reinvigorated the mainframe market in the past year with the z14 and the announcement this month of the open source project, Zowe. 30 years ago as I started my career as a bright-eyed mainframe developer, I received questions and comments from “what is a mainframe?” to “there is no future in mainframes”. The most optimistic observer – outside of diehard mainframers – gave it 5 years. I doubted them then, and I doubt mainframe naysayers more now. 30 years later I am proud to work at a company that understands and values the power of the mainframe. Near the end of last year, BMC installed our own z14 – the 11th one IBM rolled out.

Power - There are many reasons for the renewed enthusiasm around mainframes and specifically the z14. There are more COBOL transactions per day than Google searches or Tweets – probably not a number any of us can fathom. We tend to think of our palm devices as the location of all data activity, but all those transactions each of us initiates on our phone or tablet most likely triggers one or more mainframe transactions. “Nine out of the top 10 global life and health insurance providers process their high-volume transactions on a System z mainframe”

(<https://www.zdnet.com/article/with-the-world-embracing-cloud-computing-who-needs-mainframes/>) As transaction volume grows exponentially, the power of the mainframe is vital to support it.

Security - Security has always been a primary business benefit of mainframes. IBM has reinforced and amplified this by building pervasive encryption into the z14. Pervasive encryption allows applications and organizations to transparently – hence the alternative name of Transparent Data Encryption – encrypt all data at rest. This means the data on the disk is in an encrypted format. Applications can still access the data without having to add decompress/recompress code, but

outside users cannot read the data on disk. This is a significant value add of the z14 as it can be implemented with simple policies and no application redesign. Businesses do not risk users copying files and taking them offsite, compromising customers' private data. Predicting the benefit and demand from customers, BMC announced pervasive encryption support of its Db2 products (link to TB 6/1/18).

Usability – The “green screens” have never been touted as the world's easiest interface. With the recent announcement of Zowe, the Mainframe is now poised to be available to a whole new generation of developers. Zowe is an open source project that will open doors to new applications being developed on the Mainframe without sacrificing any of the attributes that are relied upon by the biggest and most dynamic companies.

From the 2017 BMC Mainframe Survey, 52% of users see increased transaction volumes and 58% expect MIPs growth. There is no doubt that the data processed by today's applications 5 years from now will be volumes more than today's data. Much as we gawked we first saw 1 million and then 1 billion row Db2 tablespaces, I imagine we will gawk a few more times at data volumes in the next 5 years. For me, this is an exciting time to be in the mainframe world.