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IBM, APC to jointly develop data centers

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February 05, 2007 (Computerworld) It's not quite a data center in a box, but American Power Conversion Corp. (APC) has begun working with IBM on pre-engineered data centers aimed at small and midsized businesses that need facilities in the 500- to 1,000-square-foot range.

One customer already working with the two vendors, Bryant University in Smithfield, R.I., is now building a 450-square-foot data center. Arthur Gloster, CIO at the university, said IT operations had grown up piecemeal and are in several locations around the campus. The university is now interested in consolidation.

IBM is preconfiguring systems intended to work with APC's In-Row InfraStruXure systems, which provide power and cooling without the need for a raised floor -- something that was attractive to Bryant officials. The vendors have named their offering the Scalable Modular Data Center

The university is a longtime IBM user, but the real benefit of the joint effort has been the coordination between the vendors, even on things such as getting the necessary building permits, said Richard Siedzik, director of computer and telecommunications services at Bryant. "The two have all the knowledge experts that we need for this," he said.

Jed Scaramella, an IDC analyst, said the decision by APC and IBM to work together on a data center development project is a sign of things to come as server vendors pay more attention to cooling and power needs. By giving users a single point of contact when building a new data center, the vendors are responding to the disconnect that exists between some facility managers and IT managers.

That disconnect has led to data center managers ordering new servers without knowing about all the power and cooling needs of the systems on an existing data center infrastructure. The cost of electricity is "becoming a critical cost factor and people are starting to pay a lot more attention to it," Scaramella said.

The university hopes to move all its equipment into the data center by June. Gloster said he looked at other approaches to consolidation, but the IBM-APC effort was the most cost-effective move for him.

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