HOST: Hi, and welcome to the "Did you say Mainframe?" podcast series. This is where we regularly interview IBM technical experts who can help you to understand important IBM mainframe hardware and software issues. I'm your host Nick Garrod.

Today we're going to talk about [Maintaining Service Level Agreements with dynamic workload management]

Our guest today is [Paul Johnson] from [CICS Worldwide Development in Hursley, UK]. it's great to have you here.

SME: Hello there, it's very nice of you to invite me

HOST: Before we begin, I'd like to mention to our listeners that there is more information in an announcement letter, and a white paper. I'll be giving out more information at the end of this podcast.

HOST Q1: So Paul, I believe you're going to tell us a little about the new enhancements to CICSPlex SMs Dynamic Workload Management component in CICS TS 4.1.

SME A1: Yes. As our audience will probably know, CICSPlex SM has provided dynamic workload management capabilities since its first introduction in 1993. That was a long time ago, and as the world has changed and exploitation has grown, the CICSPlex SM component has been constantly adapted to cope with those changes. Today, without CICSPlex SMs WLM facilities, many CICS based businesses simply would not function. The changes in version 4 exploit the coupling facility in order to smooth and further improve application throughput, whilst maintaining a highly available application environment.

HOST Q2: OK, I've heard the term "dynamic workload management" in many contexts. Could you help explain?

SME A2: Sure. It's a common confusion. There are various components in the CICS ecosystem which contribute to dynamic workload management.

The key reason for doing dynamic workload management is to provide continuous application availability. Note that that is different than continuous server availability. Individual servers can fail in a system, but so long as the work is directed appropriately, then the application is still available to the end user. SLAs can also be achieved by appropriate choice of server.

There are principally three layers of dynamic management.

Requests come in over the network and are balanced by the network layer (for instance sysplex distributor)

Individual requests within CICS are managed by the CICSPlex SM WLM component, which is the component we're principally interested in here.

Both the network and CICSPlex SM are complemented by the workload management facilities provided by the zSeries System Resource Manager.

Take a look at the white paper for more details.

HOST Q3: So whats new in CICSPlex SMs WLM component in CICS TS 4?

SME A3: When CICSPlex SM WLM was originally introduced to the world, the parallel sysplex environment had hardly been announced, let alone adopted. The design point for CICSPlex SM was multi sysplex; non sysplex CICS configurations.

Today many more customers use sysplex, and so it only seemed natural to exploit the sysplex coupling facility's capabilities which are now mainstream. That gave us opportunities to move from a partitioned storage model to a shared storage model for shared data within a sysplex. That gave us performance enhancements, and reduced latencies in propagating information across a CICS network that is used in deciding where to route a particular workload request.

HOST Q4: How do you use the coupling facility to achieve this?

SME A4: Well, we could have accessed the coupling facilty directly, but as CICS already provided the ability to exploit the coupling facility through its shared data tables support, this was a more natural approach for a CICS implementation.

HOST Q5: Does that mean I have a lot of setup to do?

SME A5: No. Setup is minimal. Most is automatically done by the server software.

HOST Q6: Can it coexist with my existing exploitation of data tables?

SME A6: Yes. You can use an existing server or set up an additional one if you like.

HOST Q7: What if I already use CICSPlex SM WLM?

SME A7: You don't have to use the new facilities. You can continue to run as before. If you do utilise them then you will gain the benefits, and should the coupling facility fail WLM will fall back seamlessly to its old mode until the CF is available again.

HOST Q8: You mentioned benefits. What are they?

SME A8: Yes, in our testing environment here in Hursley we've seem smoother task distribution, and improved transaction throughput. Of course the results will depend on your specific environement and application workload, but the results are encouraging. The details can be seen in the white paper.

HOST: [Paul], that was really interesting.

SME: Yes well thanks very much for giving me the opportunity to talk about this exciting new technology. Hopefully we've generated enough interest for people to go look at the details which can be found in the white paper ].

HOST: Well, that wraps up this podcast discussion. To find out more about the [], please go to the description for this podcast at:
http://www.ibm.com/software/os/systemz/podcasts/websphereonz/

Join us next time as we talk about another important mainframe topic. For now, this is Nick Garrod saying "Thanks for listening".

Speaker information:

Title:

Summary: Hear about the latest CICSPlex SM WLM enhancements

Speaker Name: Paul Johnson

Speaker Bio:
Paul Johnson is CICS System Management and Tools Architect at IBM Hursley. After initially working in the base CICS system management area, he played lead roles in CICSPlex System Manager, CICS Performance Manager, CICS Configuration Manager products. Paul has been with IBM for 25years, joining IBM after several years post doctoral research in High Energy Physics. He is currently a member of the CICS planning and strategy group, responsible for System Management strategy and content.

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