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OpenBlockS, The Linux Server in the Palm of Your Hand

The server world is not how it used to be anymore

OpenBlockS, a miniature server running in the palm of your hand
Plat'Home

Those of you who have had the opportunity of seeing a fully-fledged server up and running will surely have a shocking surprise, as Plat'Home, a Japanese PC vendor has just introduced its OpenBlockSTM, a pocketable server running on Linux. The device can be "hosted" directly into the palm of your hand, rather than into a datacenter, as one would have expected. The OpenBlockSTM is an easy-to-use, easy-to-configure miniature system that pitches at the growing companies. In order to achieve this miniature size, the manufacturer had to strip down any "disposable" piece of hardware, such as fans or bulky heatsinks. The storage options have been shifted from the conventional hard-disk drives to the more elegant and compact solid-state media. The result is a miniature and energy-efficient Linux server, that draws about 4.6 watts of power. According to the company, 76 of these devices take up about the same amount of energy as a regular server from IBM or Dell.Plat'Home's OpenBlockS server comes in a 4.5- x 3.2- x 1.5-inch form factor and runs a pre-installed version of SSD/Linux (Debian and NetBSD are also supported). Under the miniature casing, the server hides a 266MHz AMCC PowerPC manufactured by IBM, 2x10/100BaseTX Ethernet Ports, 1 RJ-45 Serial port and a Compact Flash or IDE 2.5″ HDD to meet the storage requirements. "Creating an appliance server with the OpenBlockS was surprisingly easy. Its flexibility and reliability has given us a noteworthy advantage. We could lower costs, while strengthening our networks at the same time," says Hideki Takeuchi, group leader of the KDDI technical service center.The server is tailored to meet the demands in surveillance and automation processes, as it is extremely reliable and rugged. Also, the mini-server can be used as a network troubleshooting tool, as it can detect errors such as packet loss, delay, fluctuation, and duplication. The miniature device can serve a local network, and ensure line quality for a critical server or terminal in high-speed environments."The OpenBlockS has done very well in the Japanese market because it can answer so many needs for service suppliers and software vendors all at once. North American users will have the advantage of a so-called 'brand-new' solution that has already been stress-tested in a demanding market," said Tomoyasu Suzuki, president of Plat'Home. "This is good technology, at a good price, in a very small box."The company is currently shipping sampling units of the OpenBlockS miniature server, but final pricing and availability have not been revealed yet.