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Sun to OEM Alteon's Gigabit Ethernet products

Sun hints it may want to "own" its own Gigabit Ethernet technology

By Robert McMillan

San Francisco (May 1, 1997) -- Steven Moustakas says that next week's Network+Interop show in Las Vegas, NV, will separate the reality from the vaporware in the Gigabit Ethernet space. And Moustakas, the director of marketing for network products at Sun Microsystems Computer Company, says that Sun is not selling vaporware. The company will be showing real working (if not shipping) product at its N+I booth next week in the form of a Gigabit Ethernet network interface card and server switch from Alteon Networks (San Jose, CA). Sun is working with Alteon to optimize the products for S-Bus and Solaris and expects to have shipping product by the third quarter this year.



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Moustakas says that Sun is selling both the card and the switch -- a Sun first -- because the Gigabit Ethernet standard isn't expected to be in place until early 1998, and Sun wanted to ensure the Gigabit Ethernet cards it was selling would interoperate with its switches.

The switch supports up to eight 10- to 100-megabit-per-second connections and has two one-gigabit-per-second ports.

Sun clearly sees Gigabit Ethernet as playing a major role in the network-centric future it wants to dominate. It has taken an active role in the standard-setting Gigabit Ethernet alliance and has penned a white paper on the technology -- months before it intends to deliver product. Both are signs that Sun is treating this as more than just OEM technology. Moustakas wouldn't comment directly on whether Sun planned to develop or acquire its own Gigabit Ethernet technology, but he did hint: "We are looking at all different options as far as our Gigabit Ethernet strategy is concerned. If Sun believes that a core technology is required to be in place to enter a marketplace, Sun needs to own that technology, and I think Gigabit Ethernet is very core to our future."

Sun's Gigabit Ethernet S-Bus card and switch will ship in Q3 1997. The S-Bus card will list for \$2,300, and the switch will cost \$10,000. Alteon's AceSwitch Gigabit Ethernet switch and network interface card list for \$9,000 and \$1,500, respectively. ■

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