Virtualized SAP Solution Using Cisco Unified Computing System and EMC® CLARiiON® Storage

Featuring Intel Xeon Processor 5600 Series and Cisco Extended Memory Technology

White Paper

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Contents

1. Executive Summary

SAP provides a comprehensive range of enterprise software applications and business solutions to empower every aspect of commerce and increase operational efficiency.

Customers use SAP services either through an IT-deployed model or through a hosted model, with the former being the more common platform. Traditional deployments have SAP installed on dedicated servers, usually calibrated to meet the peak workload rather than the average workload. This results in system underutilization and corresponding high rates of IT expenditure for both hardware and maintenance.

The emergence of virtualization as a mainstream enterprise technology has dramatically altered the way IT uses its infrastructure. Consequently, SAP customers are using virtualization technology more often to optimize their IT landscape and reduce their hardware and operating costs. By running SAP in a virtualized environment, additional qualitative benefits accrue. Easier system maintenance, the flexibility to move applications from server to server, and higher levels of system availability and scalability can be achieved, resulting in increased business agility.

Even though virtualization has created a market transition, customers are facing challenges in achieving the full benefits of the technology. IT departments are constantly facing existing rigid, inflexible hardware platforms. To address these challenges and also as a natural next step in the Cisco® Data Center 3.0 vision, Cisco has developed the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS). The Cisco Unified Computing System is the next-generation data center platform that unites compute, network, and storage access. The platform, optimized for virtual environments, is designed using open industry-standard technologies and aims to reduce total cost of ownership (TCO) and increase business agility. Cisco UCS servers are powered by Intel® Xeon® processors.

This document details the performance scalability of the Cisco Unified Computing System with EMC® CLARiiON® Storage. Specifically, it compares the Cisco UCS B200 M1 and M2 Blade Servers with standard memory to the Cisco UCS B250 M1 and M2 Extended Memory Blade Servers, which use the Cisco Extended Memory Technology, running a virtualized SAP enterprise resource planning (ERP) workload. Both servers are powered by best-in-class Intel Xeon 5600 series processors. The study demonstrates why the Cisco UCS platform, coupled with Intel Xeon 5600 series processors and EMC CLARiiON storage, is a great fit for virtualized SAP solutions.

2. Introduction

With end-to-end infrastructure services optimization a primary data center goal today, application service providers (ASPs) as well as users are aligning their practices to help achieve cost benefits without compromising the expected performance metrics for their applications.

There has been a logical transition in the way IT works: ASPs and users used to have server hardware for their applications dedicated on a one-to-one basis; then they moved to simple infrastructure hosting, and now they are using cloud computing strategies. Additionally, the delivery model has transitioned from software shipped on CDs to standard application software and to today's on-demand services. These dynamics in the current IT space have fuelled the need for companies to work on transitioning their offerings to cost-effective software-delivery models.

Business Case

To cater to a large potential customer base of midsize companies or small businesses that want the benefits of large-scale business applications without the need for a large IT infrastructure, companies like SAP have come up with many software-as-a-service (SaaS) offerings such as SAP Business ByDesign and SAP CRM-on-Demand. These on-demand offerings are usually based on multi-tenant and multi-client architecture, which provides the capability to deliver similar services to multiple customers from a single optimized implementation platform.

This business scenario establishes the premise for this document. The SAP application service is provided from a template-based environment in which the development, quality assurance, and testing environments operate from individual virtual machines, and customer instances operate from separate individual virtual machines. This approach also establishes the needed logical isolation of customer-sensitive data from other data.

Proposed Solution

Cisco, EMC, and Intel have jointly developed a reference architecture that addresses this business case.

In summary, a number of fully provisioned virtual machines are built on the Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers powered by Intel Xeon processor 5600 series with EMC storage as the backbone. Each virtual machine can potentially be assigned to a customer, enabling companies to increase the number of customers served per hardware platform and achieve outstanding SAP application performance and scalability while lowering IT costs. By setting up and managing virtual connections, the Cisco Unified Computing System helps solve the most vexing virtualization performance challenges. With the SAP application running on the Cisco Unified Computing System, the result is a price-to-performance ratio for virtual machine support that is the best in the industry.

Tests were conducted to determine the maximum number of virtual machines each Cisco UCS blade server could support. The qualifying factor was a user response time service-level agreement (SLA) of less than or equal to 1 second. The platforms tested include:

- Cisco UCS B200 M2 Blade Server with Intel Xeon X5680 3.33-GHz processor with 96 GB total memory
- Cisco UCS B250 M2 Extended Memory Blade Server with Intel Xeon X5680 3.33-GHz processor with 192 GB total memory
- EMC CLARiiON CX4-480, used as the storage platform for both cases

The following sections in this document detail the Cisco Unified Computing System, Intel Xeon 5600 series processors, and EMC CLARiiON used in the case study, the solution implemented, performance results, and applicability.

3. Product Overview

Cisco Unified Computing System

The Cisco Unified Computing System is a next-generation data center platform that unites compute, network, and storage access. The platform, optimized for virtual environments, is designed using open industry-standard technologies and aims to reduce TCO and increase business agility. The system integrates a low-latency, lossless 10 Gigabit Ethernet unified network fabric with enterprise-class, x86-architecture servers. The system is an integrated, scalable, multichassis platform in which all resources participate in a unified management domain.

The Cisco Unified Computing System represents a radical simplification of the traditional blade server deployment model by providing simplified, stateless blades and a blade server chassis that is centrally provisioned, configured, and managed by Cisco UCS Manager. The result is a unified system that significantly reduces the number of components while offering a just-in-time provisioning model that allows systems to be deployed or redeployed in minutes rather than hours or days.

The Cisco Unified Computing System is designed to deliver:

- Reduced TCO at the platform, site, and organizational levels
- Increased IT staff productivity and business agility through just-in-time provisioning and mobility support for both virtualized and nonvirtualized environments
- A cohesive, integrated system that is managed, serviced, and tested as a whole
- Scalability through a design for up to 320 discrete servers and thousands of virtual machines, and the capability to scale I/O bandwidth to match demand
- Industry standards supported by a partner ecosystem of industry leaders

Innovations Supporting Business Benefits

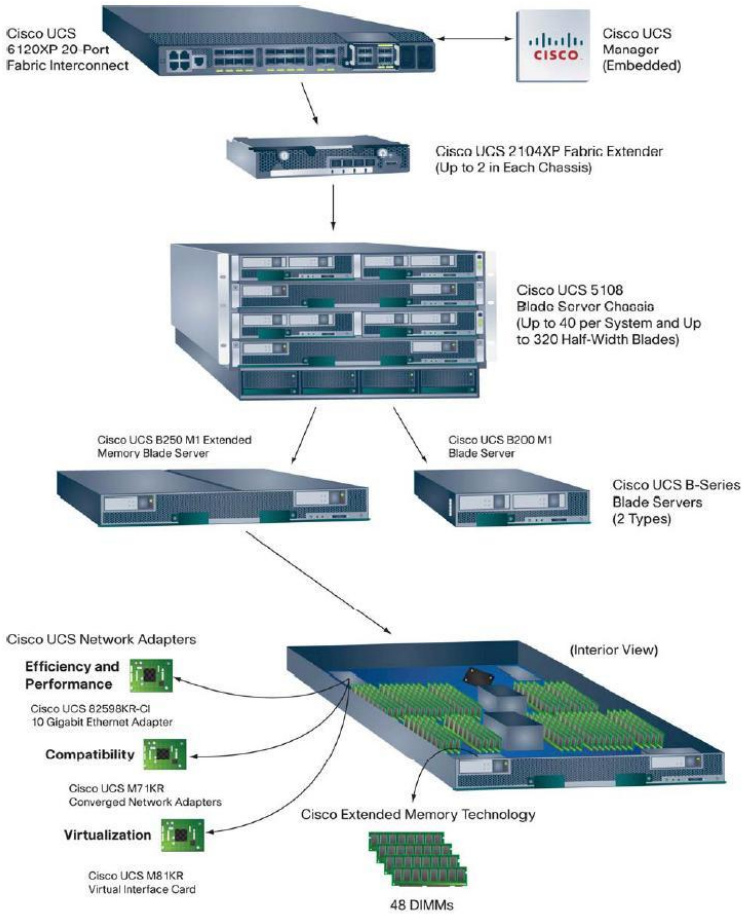
Each of the system's business benefits is supported by a rich set of technical innovations that contribute to this first implementation of the Cisco unified computing vision:

- Embedded system management through Cisco UCS Manager
- Just-in-time provisioning with service profiles
- Unified fabric using 10-Gbps Ethernet
- Cisco VN-Link virtualization support
- Cisco Extended Memory Technology
- State-of-the-art performance using Intel Xeon Processors
- Energy-efficient platform design

Cisco Unified Computing System Components

Figure 1 shows the components of the Cisco Unified Computing System.

Figure 1. Cisco Unified Computing System Components



- Cisco UCS 6100 Series Fabric Interconnects: This family of line-rate, low-latency, lossless, 10-Gbps Ethernet interconnect switches consolidate I/O within the system. Both 20-port one-rack-unit (1RU) and 40-port 2RU versions accommodate expansion modules that provide Fibre Channel and 10 Gigabit Ethernet connectivity.
- Cisco UCS Manager: Cisco UCS Manager provides centralized management capabilities, creates a unified management domain, and serves as the central nervous system of the Cisco Unified Computing System.
- Cisco UCS 2100 Series Fabric Extenders: The fabric extenders bring unified fabric into the blade-server chassis, providing up to four 10-Gbps connections each between blade servers and the fabric interconnect, simplifying diagnostics, cabling, and management.
- Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chassis: The Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chassis (model 5108) is a logical part of the Cisco Unified Computing System fabric interconnects, adding no management complexity to the system.

  The Cisco UCS 5108 Blade Server Chassis fits on a standard rack, is six RUs high, and physically houses blade servers and up to two Cisco UCS 2100 Series Fabric Extenders. It also houses eight cooling fans and four power supply units. The cooling fans and power supply are hot swappable and redundant. The chassis requires only two power supplies for normal operation; the additional power supplies are for redundancy. The highly efficient (in excess of 90 percent) power supplies, in conjunction with the simple chassis design that incorporates front-to-back cooling, makes the Cisco Unified Computing System very reliable and energy efficient.

- Cisco UCS network adapters: A range of options are available to meet application requirements, including adapters optimized for virtualization, converged network adapters (CNAs) for access to unified fabric and compatibility with existing driver stacks, Fibre Channel host bus adapters (HBAs), and efficient, high-performance Ethernet adapters.
- Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers: Based on Intel Xeon 5500 and 5600 series processors, these servers adapt to application demands, intelligently scale energy use, and offer best-in-class virtualization. These socket blade servers come in two forms: the Cisco UCS B200 half-slot blade servers, and the Cisco UCS B250 full-slot extended memory blade servers. The first-generation Cisco UCS B-Series M1 servers use the Intel Xeon processor 5500 series while the second-generation Cisco B-Series M2 servers use the Intel Xeon 5600 processor.

  Each Cisco UCS B200 M1 and M2 Blade Server uses one CNA and each Cisco UCS B250 M1 and M2 Extended Memory Blade Server uses two CNAs for consolidated access to the unified fabric. This design reduces the number of adapters, cables, and access-layer switches needed for LAN and SAN connectivity.

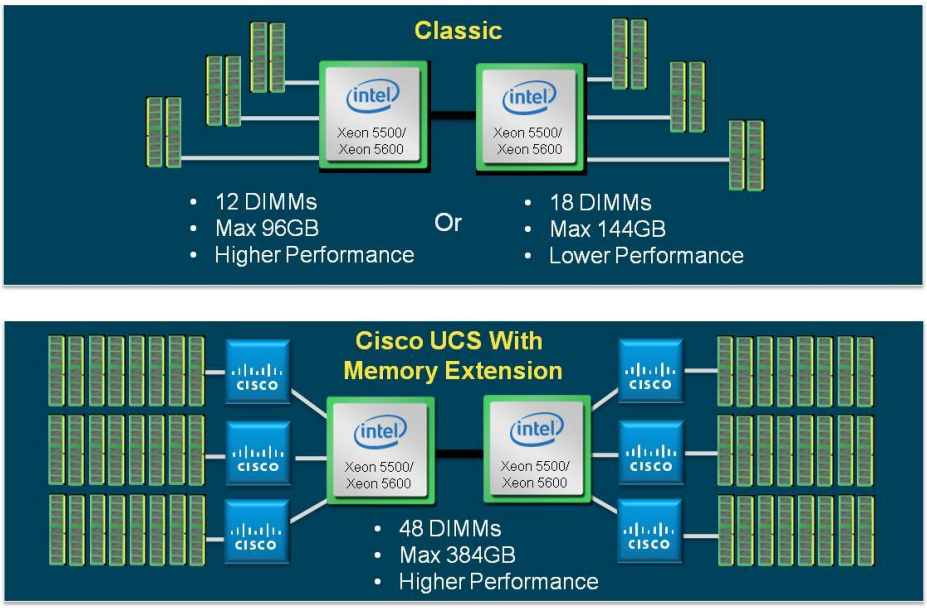
  The Cisco UCS B250 uses the patented Cisco Extended Memory Technology. This Cisco technology provides more than twice as much industry-standard memory (384 GB) as traditional two-socket servers, increasing performance and capacity for demanding virtualization and large-data-set workloads. Alternatively, this technology offers a more cost-effective memory footprint for less-demanding workloads.

Cisco Extended Memory Technology

Modern CPUs with built-in memory controllers support a limited number of memory channels and slots per CPU. Virtualization software to run multiple OS instances demands large amounts of memory, and CPU performance is outstripping memory performance, leading to memory bottlenecks. Even some traditional nonvirtualized applications such as databases demand large amounts of main memory for improved performance. To obtain a larger memory footprint, most IT departments are forced to upgrade to larger, more-expensive four-socket servers. CPUs that can support four-socket configurations often cost more, require more power, and entail higher licensing costs.

Cisco Extended Memory Technology expands the capabilities of CPU-based memory controllers by logically changing the main memory while still using standard DDR3 memory. The technology makes every four DIMM slots in the expanded-memory blade server appear to the CPU's memory controller as a single DIMM that is four times the size. For example, using standard DDR3 DIMMs, the technology makes four 8-GB DIMMS appear as a single 32-GB DIMM (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Cisco Extended Memory Architecture



Cisco Extended Memory Technology provides flexibility between memory cost and density. This extended memory uses a high-performance, ultra-fast technology that is implemented in its ASIC to allow 48 memory modules (DIMMs) to be addressed at high speed. The total memory address space per blade increases to 384 GB at 1333 MHz compared to 96 GB at 1333 MHz, or 144 GB at 800 MHz, on alternative hardware provided by other Intel based two-socket server vendors, which can use up to 18 memory modules (DIMMs).

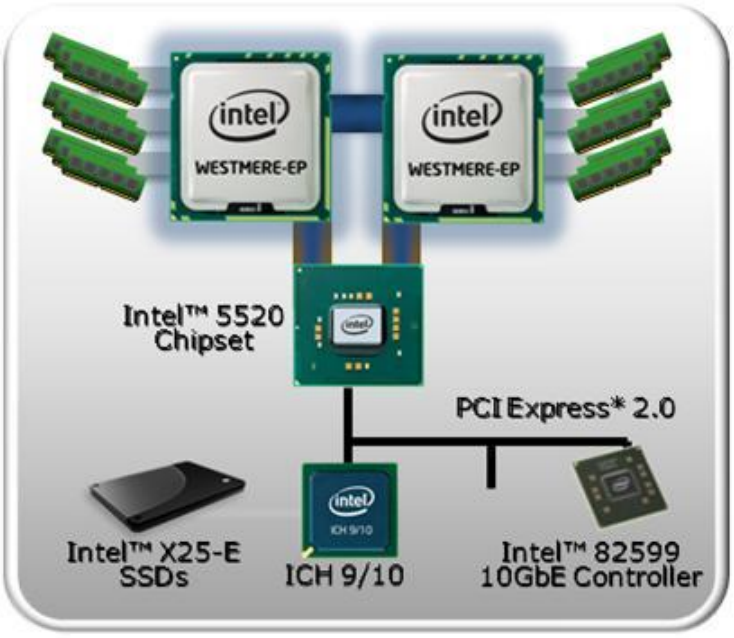
This patented technology allows the CPU to access more industry-standard memory than ever before in a two-socket server:

- For memory-intensive environments, data centers can better balance the ratio of CPU power to memory and install larger amounts of memory to make the most of compute resources. With a larger main memory footprint, CPU utilization can improve because of fewer disk waits on page-in and other I/O operations, making more effective use of capital investments.
- For environments that need significant amounts of main memory but that do not need a full 384 GB, smaller-sized DIMMs can be used in place of 8-GB DIMMs, with resulting cost savings

Intel Xeon Processor 5600 Series

The Intel® Xeon® processor 5600 series delivers substantial increases in performance and energy-efficiency versus the previous generation Intel® Xeon® processor 5500 series (Figure 3). It also provides embedded technologies that give business, creative, and scientific professionals the power to solve problems faster, process larger data sets, and meet bigger challenges. This processor family introduces Intel AES-NI, which accelerates core encryption and decryption processes to enable strong security with less impact on overall server performance.

Figure 3. Intel Xeon Processor 5600 Series



In addition to Intel AES-NI, server platforms based on the Intel® Xeon® processor 5600 series continue to support features from the previous generation processor that enable it to respond intelligently to workloads to provide additional improvements in performance and energy-efficiency.

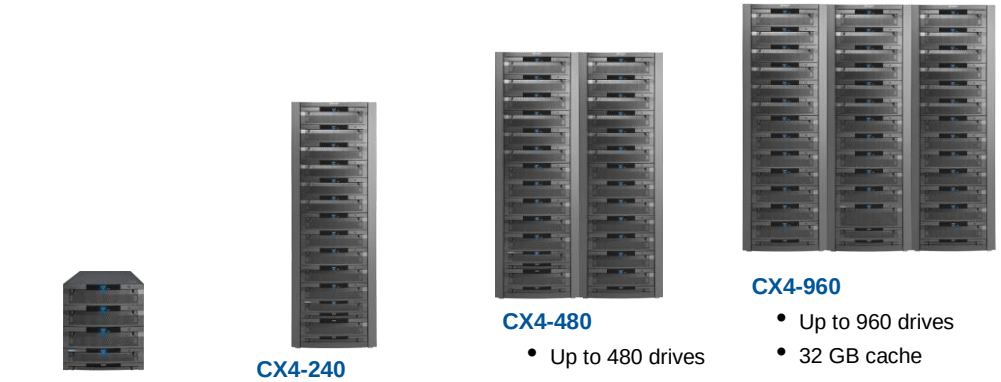
- Intel® Turbo Boost Technology boosts performance as needed by dynamically adjusting core frequency to increase execution speed for peak workloads.
- Intel® Intelligent Power Technology adjusts core frequencies to conserve power when demand is lower.
- Intel® Hyper-Threading Technology improves throughput and reduces latency for multithreaded applications and for multiple workloads running concurrently in virtualized environments

EMC CLARiiON

The EMC CLARiiON CX4 series (Figure 4) with UltraFlex™ technology is based on a new breakthrough architecture and extensive technological innovation, providing a midrange solution that is highly scalable, meeting the price points of most midrange customers. The unique modularity of the UltraFlex™ technology allows you to use a combination of protocols within a single storage system, providing online-expandable connectivity options. It also includes new levels of ease of use, making the CX4 easy to install, manage, and scale. The CX4 is the fourth-generation CX series, and continues EMC's commitment to maximizing customer's investments in CLARiiON technology by ensuring that existing resources and capital assets are optimally utilized as customers adopt new technology. The innovative technologies in the CX4 includes fully automated storage tiering and support for the latest generation of disk drive technologies, such as Flash Drives.

The CLARiiON CX4 series introduces thin LUN technology that builds on CLARiiON virtual LUN capabilities and seamlessly integrates with CLARiiON management and replication software. With CLARiiON Virtual Provisioning™, you can choose between traditional LUNs, metaLUNs, and thin LUNs. The ability to non-disruptively migrate data to different LUN and disk types allows you to deploy the best solution without incurring downtime. Virtual Provisioning enables organizations to reduce costs by increasing utilization without over provisioning of storage capacity, simplifying storage management, and reducing application downtime

Figure 4. EMC CLARiiON CX4 Series



CX4-120

- Up to 120 drives
- 6 GB cache
- Standard 4 Fibre Channel/4 iSCSI
- Maximum 16 front-end Fibre Channel and/or iSCSI

CX4-240

- Up to 240 drives
- 8 GB cache
- Standard 4 Fibre Channel/4 iSCSI
- Maximum 20 front-end Fibre Channel and/or iSCSI

CX4-480

- Up to 480 drives
- 16 GB cache
- Standard 8 Fibre Channel/4 iSCSI
- Maximum 24 front-end Fibre Channel and/or iSCSI
- Flash drives

CX4-960

- Up to 960 drives
- 32 GB cache
- Standard 8 Fibre Channel/4 iSCSI
- Maximum 32 front-end Fibre Channel and/or iSCSI
- Flash drives

CLARiiON also provides the Navisphere® Management Suite, which is a suite of tools that allows centralized management of CLARiiON storage systems. Navisphere provides a centralized tool to monitor and configure CLARiiON storage. The Navisphere suite includes Navisphere Manager, which has a web-based UI, Navisphere Secure CLI (Command Line Interface). CLARiiON provides functional capabilities like point-in-time local replicas and remote replication options for business continuity using the Navisphere management tool. Navisphere Management Suite also includes EMC Navisphere Quality of Service Manager, Navisphere Analyzer, SnapView™, SAN Copy™, and MirrorView™.

4. Case Study

The case study involved the use of Cisco UCS B200 and B250 M2 servers running SAP ERP 6.0 EHP4 in virtual machines of VMware ESX 4.0 with storage carved out of the EMC CLARiiON CX4-480 backbone. Both servers were running the Intel Xeon processor X5680.

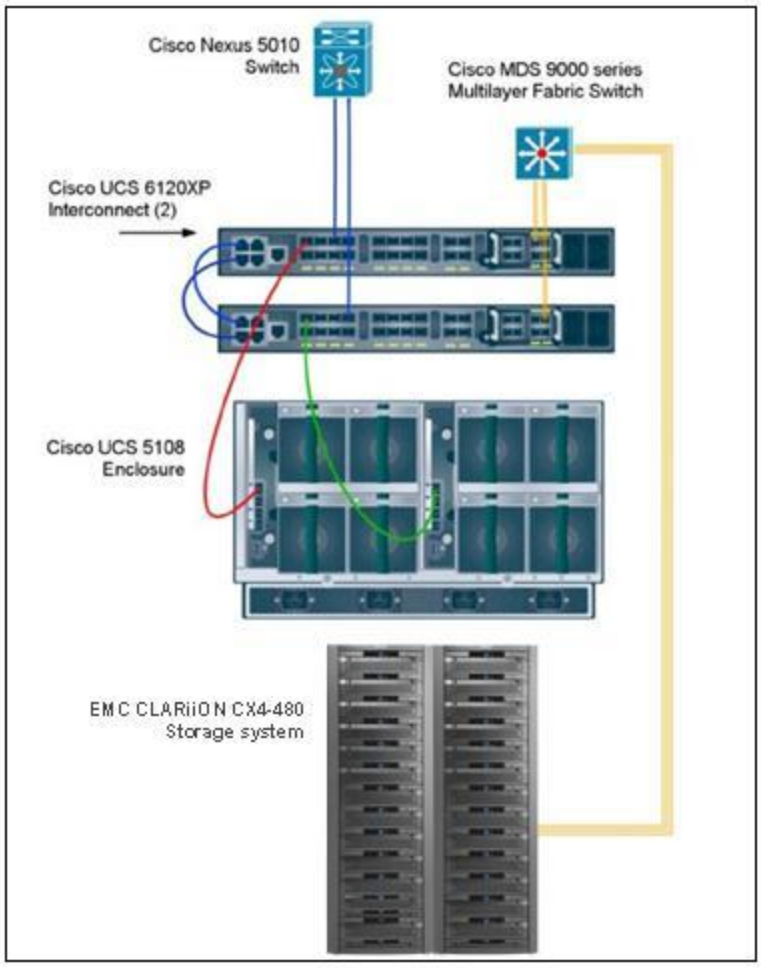
Solution Architecture

SAP ERP 6.0 EHP4 with SUSE Linux Enterprise Server (SLES) 10 SP2 x86-64 and Oracle 10.2.0.4 OS and database combination was installed on VMware ESX 4.0 virtual machines. The virtual machines have a uniform configuration with four virtual CPUs (vCPUs) with 12 GB of memory and configured to support a maximum of 300 concurrent users.

As in a typical customer implementation, each virtual machine was configured to represent a customer installation and had 250 GB of storage allocated.

Figure 5 shows the network topology of the test setup.

Figure 5. Test Setup



Hardware and Software Configuration

The following are the test configurations:

- Cisco UCS B200 M2 with Intel® Xeon® processor X5680 and 96GB of memory
- Cisco UCS B250 M2 with Intel® Xeon® processor X5680 and 192GB of memory

Table 1 shows the test configuration components.

Table 1. Test Configuration Components

BLADE NAME	CISCO UCS B200 M2	CISCO UCS B250 M2
Platform ID	SS500GD	SS500GD
Mezzanine card(s)	1x (Cisco UCS M71 KR-Q CNA)	2x (Cisco UCS M71 KR-Q CNA)
NICs	2x (Intel 82598EB 10Gb NIC) from the mezzanine card	4x (Intel 82598EB 10Gb NIC) From two mezzanine cards
HBAs	2 x (QLogic ISP2434 4Gb FC) from the mezzanine card	2 x (QLogic ISP2434 4Gb FC) from the two mezzanine cards
Local storage	2x(Fujitsu 146GB 10K-RPM SAS)	2x(Seagate 146GB 10K-RPM SAS)
Cisco UCS firmware version	1.3(0.128)	1.3(0.128)
Processors	2 Intel Xeon X5680 (3.33GHz)	2 Intel Xeon X5680 (3.33GHz)
Processor code name	X5680	X5680
Frequency	3.33GHz	3.33GHz
Intel QuickPath Interconnect (QPI) speed	6.4 gigatransfers per second (GT/s)	6.4GT/s
Layer 1 cache and core	32KB	32KB
Layer 2 cache	256KB	256KB
Layer 3 cache and socket	12GB	12GB
Memory	96GB = 12x 8GB DDR3 1333MHz	192GB = 48x 4GB DDR3 1333MHz
BIOS version	S5500.1.2.0.3	S5500.1.2.0.6
BIOS date	2/11/2010	3/2/2010
HT	Enabled	Enabled
Turbo	Enabled	Enabled
Non-Uniform Memory Access (NUMA)	Enabled	Enabled
VT	Enabled	Enabled
Hypervisor	VMware ESX 4.0 U1 build 208167 on local storage	VMware ESX 4.0 U1 build 208167 on local storage
Number of vCPUs per virtual machine	4	4
Memory per virtual machine	12GB	12GB
Storage per virtual machine	250GB LUN from EMC CLARiiON CX4-480 with FC disks	250GB LUN from EMC CLARiiON CX4-480 with FC disks

Number of virtual machines run	7	12
Guest OS	SLES10-SP2 SUSE Linux x86_64	SLES10-SP2 SUSE Linux x86_64
SAP version	ERP 6.0 EHP4	ERP 6.0 EHP4
Database	Oracle 10.2.0.4.0	Oracle 10.2.0.4.0

Workload Description

For the test, each virtual machine represents one customer deployment of the SAP ERP solution. Each virtual machine has a maximum user load based on the sales and distribution center workflow. Virtual machines were added until the average user response times across all virtual machines exceeded the SLA of less than or equal to 1 second. Performance is reported as the total number of virtual machines supported, the aggregate number of concurrent users across all virtual machines, the average response time across all virtual machines, and the physical CPU utilization.

Performance Results

Figure 6 shows the results that were achieved on these two platforms. As can be seen, the Cisco UCS B200 M2 was able to scale to 7 virtual machines, which corresponds to 2100 users. At this stage, the platform is out of memory, while CPU capacity is still available. The Cisco UCS B250 M2 was able to support 12 virtual machines, corresponding to 3600 users. At this performance, the CPU capacity was fully utilized due to the availability of additional memory. Thus, the Cisco UCS B250 M2 can support 71 percent more users than the Cisco UCS B200 M2.

Figure 6. Performance Results on Virtualized Workload of SAP ERP

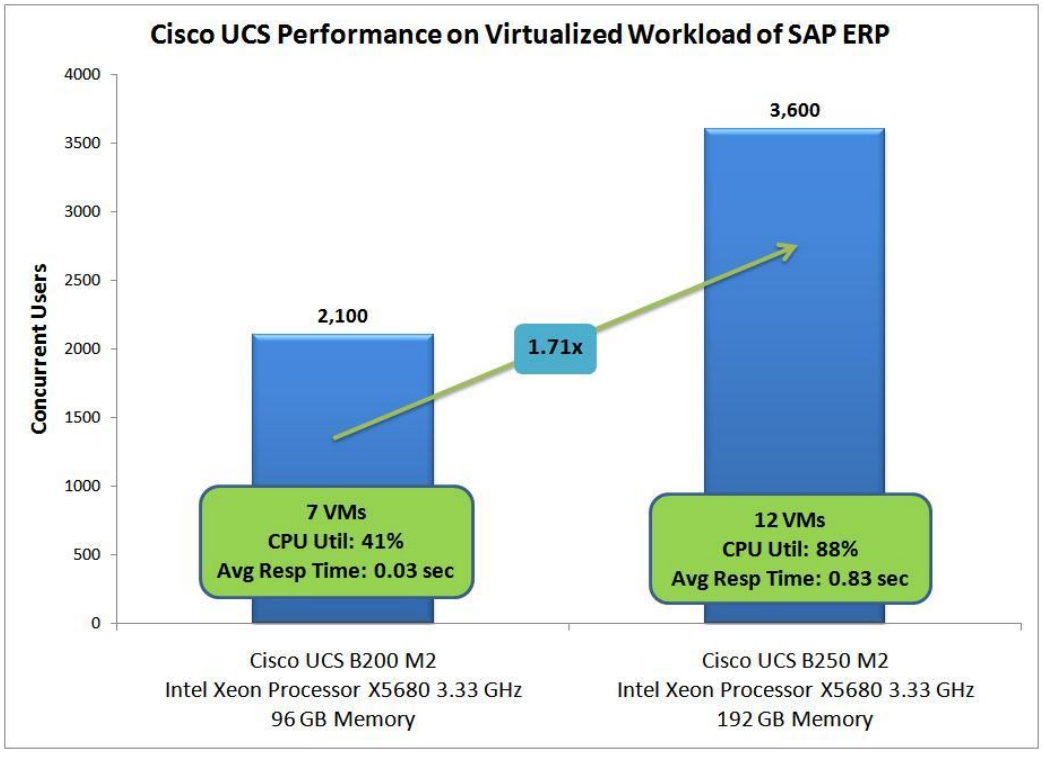
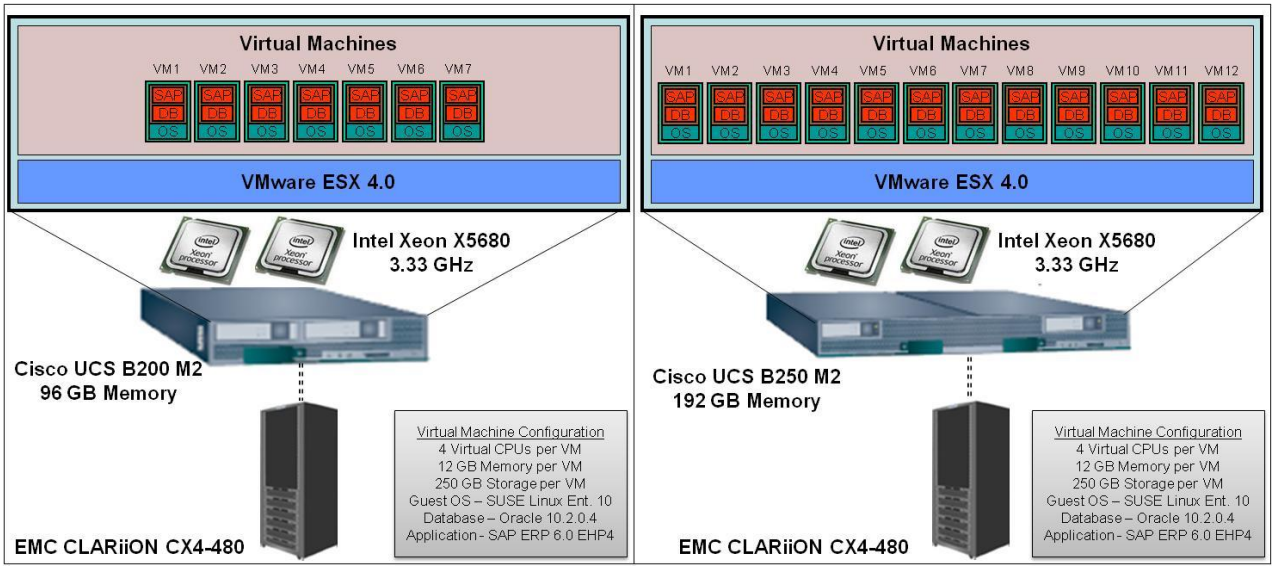


Figure 7 illustrates the performance results.

Figure 7. Performance Results

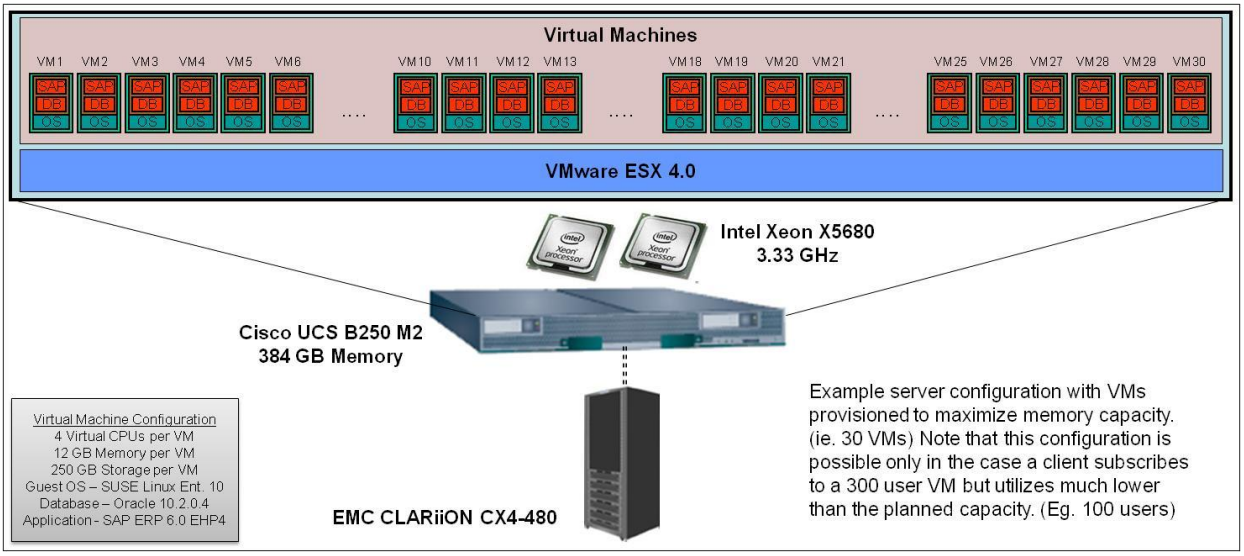


Applicability of Results to Real-World Scenarios

Extended Memory and Overprovisioning of Clients

In the case study, each customer was assigned a virtual machine capable of supporting up to 300 users. The test case ran 300 concurrent users in each virtual machine, all operating at the same time. In the real world, most customers do not connect that many users at any given time, and they usually plan for peak use patterns when they buy the capacity. Therefore, the CPU may not be as busy as in the test. But SAP's best practices recommend that physical memory should not be oversubscribed, and hence memory is committed to the client and will not be freed even if there is little activity. This setup implies that a service provider can assign more clients (that is, create more than 13 virtual machines) if the provider has additional memory resources. Thus, the Cisco Unified Computing System with up to 384 GB of memory can host more clients on a given Cisco UCS B250 blade server, making the most of the resources, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Figure 8 Extended Memory Setup



Cloud Implementation Considerations

The study described here is relevant to infrastructure service providers who are building a cloud offering. But this study in itself does not constitute a whole cloud strategy as it entails a lot of additional capability. The Cisco UCS platform is built with many technologies that can be used for cloud strategies. Technologies such as embedded system management through Cisco UCS Manager, just-in-time provisioning with service profiles, unified fabric using 10-Gbps Ethernet, Cisco VN-Link virtualization support, scalable platform architecture, and a stateless computing model, combined with best-in-class EMC CLARiiON, can provide strong building blocks for the implementation of cloud computing.

5. Conclusion

The study described here demonstrates the benefits of the Cisco UCS platform powered by Intel Xeon Processor 5600 series along with EMC CLARiiON Storage for virtualized SAP applications. It illustrates a reference architecture for building a scalable SAP service offering with optimal resource utilization. The study also shows the benefits of Cisco Extended Memory Technology for this enterprise application.

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