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## Intel moves to shore up Itanium support

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*Company to offer testimonials from pilot program at Intel Developer Forum*

Intel Corp. hopes to demonstrate that there is still plenty of momentum surrounding the support of IA-64, even though the platform's Itanium processor has been delayed for nearly three years.

At the Intel Developer's Forum (IDF) next week in San Jose, Calif., Intel will offer testimonials from some of the companies that have engaged in its Itanium pilot program, sources said. Most of these pilot program companies, which include Wells Fargo & Co. and the Mayo Clinic, have had working IA-64 systems in operation since last year.

In-depth discussions of the performance of IA-64 and Itanium, which is also referred to by its code name, Merced, will set the stage for Itanium's long-overdue release, slated for the second half of this year, sources said.

Intel's show of customer support for IA-64 and Itanium is critical, considering the secrecy of the technology's development, according to Nathan Brookwood, the principal analyst at Insight 64, in Saratoga, Calif.

"I would say they need to start some momentum [over IA-64]," Brookwood said. "I think Merced has dropped off the map. What Intel has been doing in terms of its pilot program may be good in validating the system, but we don't know, because everyone that's participating is under NDA [non-disclosure agreement]."

"Merced was first scheduled to arrive in 1999, then it was pushed back to the second half of 2000, and now here we are rapidly approaching the first quarter of 2001 and still haven't seen it," Brookwood said.

Making sure Itanium ships on time with Intel's mid-2001 launch target will play a big part in the early success of Itanium and IA-64, Brookwood said.

Also at the show, Intel will have demonstrations of its next-generation IA-64 chip, code-named McKinley. Intel plans to begin sampling McKinley by the end of this year, with full production scheduled sometime in 2002, sources said.

McKinley is expected to fully optimize IA-64. Itanium has long been seen as merely proof-of-concept for IA-64, Intel's 64-bit computing platform, according to those familiar with the technology.

For the first time in IDF history, server-related issues such as IA-64 will make up more than 50 percent of the show's content, sources said.

Intel officials will announce a speed increase in the company's Xeon processor during the show. The server chip will advance to 900MHz by the end of the year, sources said.

Intel will also announce that it will do away with the Pentium III and Pentium 4 prefixes on its Xeon line of processors, sources said.


The company will announce that its Pentium 4 chip will remain a single-processor device for PCs and that the dual-processing needs of servers and workstations will be handled by a chip code-named Foster. Foster is a next-generation Xeon chip with dual processing capabilities and the Pentium 4's NetBurst architecture. Foster is set to arrive in the second half of this year, sources said.

"What Intel is trying to do is put some distance between multiprocessor configurations, which will be

Xeon-based, and Pentium 4 chips for the desktop and low-end workstation environments," Brookwood said.

Brookwood said many Intel customers have been using less-expensive Pentium III processors in place of Xeon processors for dual processor tasks. Going forward, Intel will keep the Pentium 4, a single processor chip, with Foster addressing all multiprocessor needs. In doing so, Brookwood said, Intel will be able to keep Xeon prices high.

The Intel Developer's Forum Conference Spring 2001 runs from Feb. 26 through March 1.

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