Replace ESCON Directors using Prizm

"As part of our z10 consolidation project, we leveraged Optica's Prizm solution to replace our ESCON directors and implemented a pure FICON infrastructure while maintaining our mission critical applications that are dependent upon ESCON-based tape drives, communications controllers and printers. The ROI for Prizm was 12 months based on the maintenance and energy savings realized and we significantly improved reliability in our infrastructure."

Since the inception of FICON in the late 1990's, IBM has encouraged mainframe customers to move away from ESCON on the host and towards the higher performing and more scalable FICON protocol. However, the legendary stability of ESCON, ESCON I/O devices and the core business applications that they serve, has slowed the customer transition to FICON. In addition, the cost and operational impact of a complete FICON transition have been difficult to justify when weighed against the cost of investments in new applications required for providing competitive advantage.

The ESCON Director has played an important role in managing connectivity between the mainframe and a wide variety of ESCON peripherals. These stable environments are becoming more risky to manage as the limitation of ESCON tools and the decline in available ESCON skills has made problem determination and problem resolution more difficult. Additionally, the cost to operate and maintain ESCON Directors vs. newer, greener technologies is contributing to making ESCON Director replacement a higher priority. Optica recommends that customers using ESCON Directors should plan their transitions in advance of IBM's pending end of support announcements for these devices. End of support means that IBM will no longer offer maintenance services due to the limited availability of spare parts and engineering (level 3) support. It is anticipated that end of support for ESCON directors will be announced prior to January 2010.

Optica's Prizm is a native FICON to ESCON converter that replaces aging ESCON directors, while supporting high value ESCON devices. Prizm is exclusive technology that was developed in close partnership with IBM to provide their mainframe customers with a simplified approach for making the transition from ESCON to FICON.

We call it Managed Evolution for System z. Managed Evolution enables customers to invest in a 100% FICON channel architecture on System z, while leveraging Prizm to manage connectivity to remaining ESCON and parallel device types. Prizm leverages the efficiency, performance and tools that FICON provides, to efficiently service a wide variety of ESCON devices serving mission critical customer applications.

Prizm users can decommission their ESCON Directors, while enjoying significant reductions in power, floor space and maintenance expense. In addition, Prizm removes the ESCON limitation of 16 LPAR device access per CHPID or inbound director port and allows ESCON device connectivity to 128 LPARs across multiple mainframes for improved flexibility. Prizm delivers compelling value proposition for IBM mainframe customers that want to make the most of their System z investment.

Optica's Prizm customers have realized the following benefits:

- **Green savings** - reduced power, reduced heating and cooling costs
- **Simplified infrastructure and operations -** management of a single switched infrastructure (FICON) with streamlined change management
- **Improved reliability** – Prizm delivers significantly better MTBF and MTTR vs. ESCON directors
- **ROI** – Prizm investment can be justified in less than 18 months