solutions.

"Transaction processing monitors," like Transarc Corp.'s Encina and Novell Inc.'s Tuxedo, can handle all the essential systems management and distribution functions without DCE compliance, says Schulze.

Transarc and Novell last week joined several other hardware and software vendors at a press conference at Unix Expo in New York to herald the dawn of three-tier networking.

Representatives of Digital Equipment Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co., Tandem Computers Inc. and Magna Software reiterated their commitments to delivering a complete set of tools to build and maintain three-tier installations.

Massive Support

They also cited numerous customer examples of three-tier enterprises, including Tokio Marine & Fire Insurance Co. of Japan and the Union Bank of Finland, where an expanding network processes 3 million transactions a day and employs a 350-gigabyte database.

"Only a three-tier architecture could support that massive application and massive database," noted Tim Keefauver, corporate marketing manager at Tandem, Union Bank's hardware supplier.

However, not every vendor is enthralled by the three-tier concept. Major database suppliers like Oracle Corp. and Sybase Inc. were notably absent from the Unix Expo press conference.

"A major advantage of three-tier is a large degree of database independence, the ability to access data on any source," explained Gartner Group's Schulze. "The big database vendors have promoted two-tier (solutions) where the application logic is tightly bound into the database management system and isn't portable between the databases. They still try to lock you in."