

**Oracle-Sun: Infrastructure Management Strategy Emerges**

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On January 27, 2010, [Oracle executives outlined a strategy and roadmap for infrastructure management](#) for the combined companies, following the announcement of the closure of the Oracle-Sun merger. Integrated, full-stack application and infrastructure management has emerged as a major priority. With hardware, database, middleware, and applications, as well as systems management, now all under one roof, Oracle's goal is to drive tight integration across the entire stack so as to provide customers with better performance, reliability, scalability, security, and operational efficiency than competitors that offer more loosely coupled solutions or point products. The firm has rightly identified integrated management as a critical enabler of this strategy and is promising to deliver it by driving deep integration across the Oracle Enterprise Manager (OEM) and the Sun Ops Center products.

Plans to Drive Deep Lifecycle Integration

While continuing to guarantee support for plug-ins and connector-based interoperability with third party system management software and service desks, Oracle paints a long-term picture of a world where applications are developed from the ground up in ways that maximize and streamline runtime manageability of infrastructure resources. The firm's goal is to shift the industry to a highly integrated lifecycle view of systems management that provides integrated visibility and insight across the stack using the Oracle Enterprise Manager platform as the central console and integration point.

Oracle Enterprise Manager has been quietly building out full stack management capabilities over the past several years. Its primary strengths focus on managing Oracle-specific software environments including Oracle Enterprise Linux, Oracle VM, Oracle Applications, and Oracle Database, although it does have some visibility into Windows and heterogeneous Linux environments. OEM is particularly strong in database, middleware and application provisioning, real user performance monitoring, SOA modeling, and application functional test, regression analysis, load testing and diagnostics for Oracle environments.

Sun Ops Center, by comparison, is a relatively new product that has only been in the market about a year. It was initially designed to help Sun customers automate firmware and OS provisioning and patching of physical Sun servers. The recently released version 2.5 extended the product's capabilities to address both x86 and SPARC processor-based systems. It now offers an integrated platform to automate change, configuration, monitoring, provisioning and compliance activities across hardware, firmware, and hypervisor layers. It can support physical server environments running Solaris, Linux and Microsoft Windows operating systems or virtualized Sun Logical Domains and Solaris Containers.

Oracle rightly notes that there is little to no overlap in the capabilities of OEM and Ops Center. In the near term, Oracle has committed to supporting both standalone products; however, the goal is to drive integration between the tools relatively quickly over two or three release cycles. In the next 6–12 months, Oracle promises "light" integration with bidirectional connectors between the two to allow the exchange of events and alerts. Step 2 will be to allow each console to launch the other's events in context with the ultimate goal being full integration of all discovery, reporting, automation and analytics. IDC expects that although not specifically called out, integration of Oracle's existing virtualization management capabilities with Ops Center will also be a priority.

As the tools become more streamlined and integrated, Oracle also aims to move them into the My Oracle Support platform to leverage proactive and personalized support capabilities to enable more automated, remote discovery, monitoring, diagnostics, and management of the full application-to-disk stack — just as

My Oracle Support integrates with OEM today to aid customers in the time-consuming task of patch management by providing proactive patch recommendations and patch automation.

Disruptive Strategy Requires Top Down Selling and Long-Term Advocacy

IDC's view of this overall strategy is that it makes for elegant and compelling slideware, but it is likely to encounter significant grassroots resistance in the marketplace. Oracle is advocating a full stack management approach that not only reaches across production application, middleware, database and infrastructure assets, but also calls for use of a common toolkit across development and operational environments. It represents a radical reintegration of functions and tools that have been highly fragmented and distributed for the last 25 years.

Oracle is betting that the disruptive forces of virtualization and cloud computing, along with the emergence of converged infrastructure environments, have reached the boiling point where customers can no longer cope with the scale, speed and complexity of application and infrastructure change management, provisioning and operations using their existing, fragmented management and development strategies. Oracle is betting that combined with the tight economy and pressures to do more with less, CIOs and CEOs will mandate full stack integration as the cost effective way to deliver business services.

The success of this vision will require cultural change among customers, as well as technological investment. Even within the operations stack, getting infrastructure, database, middleware and applications administrators aligned around a common set of management tools and workflows is a challenging proposition. If Oracle is to succeed where so many other firms have struggled, it needs to sell its full stack management strategy from the top down and it needs to prepare to fuel sustained education and advocacy activities over the long haul.

IDC expects Oracle will also need to make a number of acquisitions to fill in functional management gaps, particularly in the areas of workload automation, business service management, and security. It will also need to address requirements related to dynamic network and storage provisioning automation to support virtual workload management and migration. Oracle is clearly going to shake up the status quo in the IT management marketplace. Customers should expect to see an uptick in requests for senior-level strategy sessions, and architects need to start considering how much integration their organization can reasonably adopt in the coming years.

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