



WebLogic Suite

Review From A Customer



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Team Lead - Oracle Applications DBA at a energy/utilities company with 1,001-5,000 employees

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WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

Support custom developed mobile applications while retaining middleware compatibility with other on-premise Oracle systems such as AP Imaging, eBusiness Suite 12.2, and SOA Suite.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

Provides a uniform technology platform between multiple application installations, whether Enterprise Resource Planning or Customer Relationship Management (ERP/CRM) based systems, Imaging ingestion and integration, or document content management. Administration techniques are consistent with only minor UI changes between versions, providing relatively seamless upgrade integration for future deployments and upgrade of the web platform.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

Ease of scalability through both asymmetric and symmetric clustering; ease of integration with existing and potential future Oracle product technologies; leverages many industry-standard technologies for application support (JSON, REST, SOA, JavaBeans, J2EE); continues to evolve towards a fully-integrated solution designed to front-end enterprise applications, whether related to transactional websites, dynamic content management solutions, or acting as an intermediary service provider between other web/URI data sources.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Cloning and replication (detailed below) could be much more flexible and standardized. WebLogic out-of-the-box installations are only templated and automated for Oracle-packaged applications. For independent installations, answering the myriad WebLogic setup parameters can be quite confusing as to what are the correct parameters, other than the defaults (some of which are not provided).

**FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?**

More than five years.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

WebLogic tends to be extremely stable once appropriate memory and CPU requirements have been determined for a particular application under production load conditions. When given insufficient resources, like any web application platform, we have had our share of out-of-memory errors or exhausting a Java virtual machine's capacity.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

Being extremely scalable is one of WebLogic's best features. If you anticipate dramatic upward changes in capacity, one of Oracle's Universal License Agreements might be the best approach as it decouples the CPU-based license costs from the costs to scale. In our case, we often use the same WebLogic servers for multiple applications to reduce overall licensing and maintenance costs. As long as the application is compatible with a particular version, they can co-reside (multi-tenant) on the same WebLogic cluster, keeping in mind that the additional CPU and memory resources need to be accommodated.

HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

Customer Service: Service with Oracle tends to be directly related to your amount of new product purchasing. This can be a disadvantage to mature and stable installations that don't tend to expand much (i.e. don't expect weekly follow-up calls.) A significant improvement will be experienced by customers who adopt one of Oracle's emerging technology products (such as Cloud-based WebLogic Services) wherein the success of your implementation often becomes the next customer reference for Oracle. That doesn't last forever, but it's nice to experience during the often rocky start-up stages of new technologies. **Technical Support:** My Oracle Support takes a little getting used to for new customers used to more narrowly focused technology vendors. The vast number of different products Oracle supports has created a bit of a maze of how to get connected to the technology group best capable of answering a particular question, or dealing with an issue. For example, what starts as a "My application isn't available" issue might stem from access management, database, middleware technology, the application group, or because some third-party plugin failed causing a cascade failure. Oracle does attempt to support all of its products with alacrity, but it helps a lot for you, as the customer, to know how it all fits together. Your perception could range from 4 to 9/10 depending on your experience level with the products.

WHICH SOLUTION DID I USE PREVIOUSLY AND WHY DID I SWITCH?

We use a half-dozen different application server technologies - which one is used depends more on application compatibility than choosing one specific one-size-fits-all solution. These include Microsoft IIS, LAMP (Linux-Apache-MySQL-PHP), InfoSphere, and many smaller vendors.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

One major pre-installation question that catches you unaware is the question of a "standalone" versus "single node cluster" installation style selection. Single-node clusters can be scaled up and out. Standalone installations are single-node only, and would have to be re-installed to enable clustering. This is an old throwback to the original licensing model, and tends to be a source of odd frustration if you choose the wrong one inadvertently. Most of the modern upgrade releases are now out-of-place upgrades (meaning they install to new installation file system bases, and not overlaying an existing install). This change was designed to maximize uptime, but does mean you'll need the extra storage available to have the side-by-side software reside during the upgrade process.

**WHAT ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM?**

This depends on whether we have experience configuring the new application being hosted, or not. WebLogic by itself is simply an application hosting architecture. But most application deployments are not as simple as visiting an online store and clicking an Install button. WebLogic is not what I would recommend for quickly standing up a proof-of-concept beta application. But when architecting a solution for hundreds, thousands or millions of users, it's perfectly suited.

WHAT WAS OUR ROI?

For our installations, we've recovered our initial procurement costs within the first five years of operation, simply by re-using existing excess capacity to host additional applications. Once configured for production load, there is very minimal day-to-day administration required, and integration with Oracle Enterprise Manager monitoring allows full transparency to all processes and targets within the WebLogic technology stack.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

As an application platform, you will need to carefully forecast your overall user and process load, and service-level agreements (SLA) in order to purchase an appropriate CPU count licensing, and host licensing for clustering, if needed. If your growth and capacity requirements aren't easily determined, you may want to consider Oracle's hosted Cloud options which have more of a capacity on-demand pricing model (especially the Public Cloud version.)

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

As mentioned, we purchase based upon application-focus, and not for custom development. As a result, choice of application hosting technology is driven according to compatibility and certification, rather than technical feature sets.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

Cloning and replication of WebLogic instances isn't exactly a rote science. Because the stacks become secured against the hosting environments, encapsulating and re-configuring a working installation into a new set of hosts (with differing names and IP addresses) involves several procedures to re-secure, re-encrypt and reinstate the software to hardware trust certificates. While this process is relatively encapsulated for WebLogic in eBusiness Suite, sometimes it's faster to simply re-install WebLogic on the new hosts, than attempting to re-configure from a backup from a different host set. This is differentiated from the process of scale-up or scaled-down of a cluster, which is a well-defined process by comparison (and automated as an Oracle Enterprise Manager provisioning process.) Once deployed, most change management involves the deployment of application services between instances, and not replication of the WebLogic environment itself.

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