

SUPPORT, A9 AND BEYOND

A Q&A WITH JOHN SCHIFF, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER, JD EDWARDS WORLD



Q: Several months ago at OpenWorld, Oracle announced lifetime support for all its software. What are the details of the new policy, and what does it mean for World?

A: The Lifetime Support Policy reaffirmed what we'd been talking about over the last nine months: our commitment to provide support at least through 2013. From a World perspective, it's good news that many of the other product lines are following a similar policy. But it's not an earth-shattering change for World customers. It creates one blanket level for all World customers. As long as they're paying their maintenance fees, they're covered.

Q: What can you tell us about the benefits of Oracle support as opposed to other solutions? How does your new Lifetime Support Policy announcement enhance that position?

A: Clearly, we have expertise across the product line – through the developers and the expertise that comes with years of experience. We have the right to distribute the product – an ability that others don't have. We have the ability to test, correct, and distribute enhancements in a uniform manner. It's not as though we're doing custom development on every site – it's more packaged than that. The next major thing that differentiates us is the close working relationship with IBM. We test every new thing – in fact, we have a beta agreement with IBM to test every operating system, and vice versa – IBM uses World to test. They're making sure that as they make changes to the operating system, they're not affecting performance. It's a two-way street. As we've gone through the past year, we've strengthened the support offering for World customers. You see us enhancing the product with a new release coming out. I think people were concerned about how Oracle and IBM would work together.

Q: Oracle also announced a new IBM eServer solution for JD Edwards EnterpriseOne and World users. Why should eServer users consider the offer? What should they know?

A: It's a continued partnership, and a commitment to our customers about protecting their investment. The IBM iSeries product clearly offers wide capability. What IBM has done for us is to point out which pieces of the product line are applicable to the World and EnterpriseOne users. Our customers have a good value proposition so they see a unified pricing offering across all software and hardware, and components are already chosen. We're looking to make it more economical for customers to make it to the next release. For more information, visit Oracle's Web site at www.oracle.com/corporate/press/2005_sep/owsf23.html

Q: Where (in terms of development and being ready for users) does A9 stand? How can

users get involved in testing or focus groups? What new features can we expect?

A: We have many different interactions with customers on a daily basis – through user groups, for example – where we are gathering feedback from customers. The World user group provides an ongoing forum for customers to discuss and express opinions about their investment priorities. We've done a lot of work with the World Product Advisory Council, drilling deeper into feature and function requirements, investment strategies. From those discussions, recommendations go to development, and they go to their focus groups and review what they're planning in design. It doesn't help us to build something our developers think is neat – it's about what is good for our customers, and what will provide them with a reason to upgrade. Some of the things they've told us clearly is more capability in the areas of workflow. Customers have also told us they would like closer integration with desktop tools, like importing and exporting data to Microsoft Excel, but maintaining business processes. The best way for customers to stay in contact is strong participation in the user group community. A9 is planned for 2006. We've looked at the business processes already, and we're in coding working toward the features now. We keep taking feedback. Once our strategy group starts looking beyond that, we start moving features to the next release. We really keep an ongoing tabulation list of what we've heard from the customers, and we prioritize those. The big things get nailed down much earlier.

Q: What can customers do to prepare their organizations for upgrades and migrations?

A: One thing that's important for our customers in the upcoming year is how they position themselves for future upgrades. They should examine their hardware and look at their basic infrastructure. Getting current with their hardware provides throughput to consider some additional housekeeping type of actions. Get on top of your customization – what have you changed, and why are those changes there? Answering those questions will make it easier to consider Project Fusion. Why did you deviate from the standard product set? Look at your data implementation. Many World customers have run their software for many years, and have accumulated data that isn't used on a daily basis. Purging and archiving is really important. The bottom line – do some spring cleaning before you start redecorating. How do you get ready to move forward? We've seen customers go from hundreds of custom modifications to a handful when they upgrade. Many times folks make changes because of a lack of understanding, and examining your changes can help reduce your total cost of ownership.

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