

New Release Assessment

Oracle WebCenter Suite 11g R1 Takes on Social Networking



Brad Shimmin
Principal Analyst, Collaboration and Conferencing

July 8, 2009

Product Snapshot

Product Name	Oracle WebCenter Suite 11g R1
Product Status	Update from 10g R3
Product Type	On Premise Software
Licensing Model	Named user and per processor licensing with free developer download
New Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oracle WebCenter Spaces, a team environment supporting user-driven, ad-hoc community provisioning• Social Networking tools, including tagging, linking, recent activity, RSS, ratings, people connections, and activity graphs• Oracle Business Dictionary, a directory of applications, business intelligence, business processes and content• Oracle Composer, a user-driven application mashup interface supporting social computing services• Task Flows, a collection of fifty pre-built customizable components that can be deployed as portlets• Pre-Packaged points of integration with Oracle line-of-business applications, including Siebel CRM, PeopleSoft Enterprise and E-Business Suite
Target Customer	Mid to high end enterprise customers
Rival Products	IBM WebSphere Portal, IBM Lotus Connections, Telligent Enterprise, Cisco WebEx Connect, Novell GroupWise, Jive SBS, Microsoft Exchange/SharePoint, Liferay Social Office/Portal, Vignette Social Media Solution

Current Perspective

We are taking a positive stance on Oracle's release of WebCenter Suite 11g R1, as this update adds much needed social networking tools to Oracle's Fusion middleware portfolio. Newly added capabilities empower enterprise portal developers and users with many options (APIs and pre-packaged services) for creating applications that include collaborative tools such as activity streams, people connections and profiles, announcements, publication walls (a la Facebook) and user home page personalization. This release also brings many of Oracle's nu-

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merous portal solutions (WebCenter Interaction, Oracle Portal and WebLogic Portal) into closer alignment. For example, Oracle can now bring BEA customers into WebCenter Suite through better interoperability with and improved migration tools for WebLogic Interaction (both communities and projects).

In terms of overall product focus, Oracle’s move beyond mere content toward people, context and activities within Oracle WebCenter Suite 11g R1 will help the company better compete within a rapidly broadening collaboration market that no longer depends upon portal platforms for custom enterprise application development. Such collaboration platforms and development frameworks from players including Vignette, Jive, Telligent, Cisco and Microsoft are increasingly targeting enterprise developers looking to couple collaboration with business processes.

However, while WebCenter Suite 11g includes a number of competitively advantageous capabilities, it does not natively integrate with Oracle’s relatively new Beehive collaboration platform and development framework except to exchange email, calendar and recent activities via portlets. There are no provisions as yet for discussions, document library items or presence capabilities. Also, though version 11g R1 provides basic usage monitoring for social networking-oriented communities, it does not yet provide any analytics geared toward building successful communities. Likewise, while there are some built in governance tools supporting capabilities such as filters across forums, blogs and wikis, there are no advanced tools for tasks such as data retention. For that, customers must also purchase Oracle UCM (Universal Content Management product).

Regardless, social networking updates within WebCenter Suite, considered together with Oracle’s continued work to package functionality and provide deep points of integration with its own line-of-business applications, bring Oracle into closer alignment with its primary portal rival, IBM. With this release, Oracle can now claim to have a more unified portal solution that can speak to current market demand for Web 2.0 tools and social networking capabilities, overcoming what was a weak point for Oracle in the past.

Evaluation Criteria

Services/Support: Strong

As with all Oracle software products, Oracle WebCenter 11g R1 benefits from a well-established, post-sales support and services program, but the company’s pre-sales capabilities warrant particular praise. With a new customer community portal (launched last November), a free download licensing option (for developers), early technical previews (and copious amounts of publicly available technical support information), Oracle can streamline the sales cycle for WebCenter Suite 11g R1 through openness and education - a must, given the product’s inherent complexity and developer-centric orientation.

Packaging/Pricing: Competitive

Oracle adheres to a very consistent and simple (as compared with IBM) pricing program for WebCenter Suite 11g R1, which wraps per user and per processor licensing fees together with a support/update fee, but the solution is bifurcated and geared primarily toward high-end enterprise customers. Customers can license WebCenter functionality as WebCenter Services for \$70,000 per CPU or the WebCenter Suite itself (including Web Content Management, Content DB, AquaLogic Interaction and WebLogic Portal) for \$125,000 per CPU. Smaller customers must opt for Oracle’s more limited WebLogic Portal solution.



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Go-to-Market Strategy: Outstanding

With WebCenter Suite 11g R1, Oracle is at last appealing to current market demand for Web 2.0 applications (wikis, blogs, presence, chat, etc.) that work together with social networking tools (activity streams, profiles, tagging and linking). This approach, coupled with the addition of user-driven composition and access features like Oracle Composer, WebCenter Spaces and Oracle Business Dictionary, will resonate well with enterprise customers anxious to put more power into the hands of users without incurring additional IT development overhead.

Product Maturity: Competitive

WebCenter Suite 11g R1 stands as a highly mature offering that leverages an industry-leading application server foundation (Oracle WebLogic Server) to create a Java-powered development environment for collaborative solutions that maximize enterprise investments in J2EE technologies like Java Server Faces (JSF) and scripting languages like AJAX. However, though version 11g R1 provides basic usage monitoring for social networking-oriented communities, it does not yet provide any analytics geared toward building successful communities. Likewise, while there some built in governance tools supporting capabilities such as filters across forums, blogs and wikis, there are no advanced tools for tasks such as data retention. For that, customers must also purchase Oracle UCM (Universal Content Management product).

Market Presence: Strong

Because WebCenter Suite 11g R1 is designed to be employed by Oracle middleware customers, Oracle enjoys a ready-made and significant market. Already, Oracle Fusion middleware has more than 90,000 customers worldwide. And supporting this platform, Oracle can boast of 40,000 SIs and 5,000 ISVs that are well-versed in Oracle middleware technologies. With release 11g R1, Oracle will also grow its potential customer base dramatically, as the product now integrates deeply with Oracle's full line of enterprise applications (including Siebel CRM, PeopleSoft Enterprise and E-Business Suite) as well as third party enterprise content management (ECM) solutions from IBM and EMC.