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# Oracle Application Development Tools Statement of Direction: Oracle Forms, Oracle Reports and Oracle Designer

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## Executive Overview

Oracle Forms and Reports, components of Oracle Fusion Middleware, are Oracle's long-established technologies used to design and build enterprise applications quickly and efficiently. Oracle remains committed to the development of these technologies and to their future release as components of the Oracle platform. This continuing commitment to Forms and Reports enables you to leverage your existing investment by easily upgrading and integrating existing Oracle Forms and Reports applications to take advantage of web technologies and service oriented architectures (SOA).

Oracle customers have a considerable level of investment in applications developed using the Oracle Forms, Reports and Designer products and frequently ask questions about Oracle's strategy and commitment to these products. This paper aims to answer these questions by summarizing Oracle's software development tools strategy.

The document is structured in three parts: In the first section, we discuss Oracle's software development strategy for Oracle Forms, Oracle Reports, and Oracle Designer. In the second section, we discuss Oracle's support policy and timelines for specific releases of these products. In the third section we provide specific recommendations to customers who are using these products.

## Oracle's Product Strategy

### Application Development Tools

Oracle's development tools strategy is to offer tools that enable the development of enterprise applications on Oracle Fusion Middleware. These software development tools consist of two parallel product offerings:

#### **Oracle's Classic Development Tools**

This solution set consists of the modeling environment provided by Oracle Designer, the application development framework provided by Oracle Forms, and the batch/scheduled reporting solution offered by Oracle Reports. The programming language and execution environment for these tools is PL/SQL.

## Java Development Tools

The growth and wide adoption of the Java EE platform has made it an industry standard and aligns with the strategic direction Oracle has taken with the Fusion Applications.

Oracle offers Oracle JDeveloper, a complete and integrated development environment for building enterprise applications on the Java EE platform. In addition, Oracle offers Oracle Application Development Framework, (Oracle ADF) a standards-based productivity framework for building Java EE applications. The programming language is Java and the runtime is a Java EE compliant container.

Oracle Business Intelligence Publisher (BI Publisher) also leverages the Java EE platform and open standards for developing and delivering an enterprise class reporting solution.

## Future Investment

Oracle invests in both technology offerings and the specific focus for the investments are different based on the market needs for each solution. Oracle Fusion Middleware, based on WebLogic Server, provides a common runtime environment in which both technologies can be deployed, integrated and share common services.

## Oracle's Support Policy

Oracle Forms, Oracle Reports, and Oracle Designer have a large and very active installed base, with applications developed with these tools being the cornerstone of many businesses including Oracle's own E-Business Suite. Oracle recognizes this considerable investment and remains committed to the long-term support of these products.

## Oracle's Lifetime Support Policy

Oracle's Lifetime Support Policy defines the support levels and dates for Oracle products. The support timelines for the products referenced in this document are defined here:

<http://www.oracle.com/support/library/brochure/lifetime-support-middleware.pdf>

Specifically, for each of these development tools the plans are as follows:

### Oracle Forms

Oracle has no plan to discontinue support of Oracle Forms. Furthermore, a new version of Forms, Oracle Forms 12c, is planned for delivery as a component of Oracle Fusion Middleware 12c.

In line with our product strategy, future development activities will be aimed at smoother version-to-version upgrade, integration with features of the platform/technology stack and product stability.

### **Oracle Reports**

The last major changes to Oracle Reports were in the 10g release. Since then, there have been limited new features added to the product in Oracle Reports 11gR1 and 11gR2. Development efforts for Oracle Reports since 10g have been focused on stability and bug fixes. We are planning to release Oracle Reports 12c as part of Oracle Fusion Middleware 12c.

However, Oracle's strategic reporting solution is now BI Publisher. While Oracle's support of Oracle Reports will extend well into the future, customers should begin planning their migration to BI Publisher. Many Oracle applications and products, including E-Business Suite, Siebel CRM and JD Edwards, have already changed their reporting infrastructure to use BI Publisher as a replacement to earlier reporting tools.

### **Oracle Designer**

Oracle Designer 10g was the last version of this product, released as a component of Oracle Developer Suite 10g. Oracle Designer was not released as a component of Oracle Fusion Middleware 11g, nor is it planned to be a component of Oracle Fusion Middleware 12c. Oracle Support continues to offer sustaining level support for Oracle Designer 10g.

## **Oracle's Recommendations to Customers**

Recognizing that our customers who are using Oracle Forms, Oracle Reports, and Oracle Designer are looking to Oracle for specific recommendations on their application development strategy, in this section we provide specific guidance:

### **Protect, Extend and Evolve**

Oracle has outlined a strategy which allows customers to protect the considerable investment they have in traditional technologies while allowing new tools and technologies to be adopted for evolving or new development initiatives.

### **Upgrade to the latest releases**

Protect the investment you have in your existing technology by upgrading to the latest release ensuring the best possible support for newer operating systems, hardware, browsers, and database releases and features.

### **Leverage the power of Fusion Middleware**

Oracle Fusion Middleware provides not only a rich platform to run existing Forms and Reports applications, but it provides a platform for integration with new and complementing features and technologies such as:

- User experience insight
- Content management
- Business intelligence
- SOA and process management
- Data services
- Security
- Identity management
- Enterprise management

### **Develop new application modules using JDeveloper**

JDeveloper and Oracle ADF provide a set of tools and technologies that go beyond the CRUD transactional applications typified by Oracle Forms. You may therefore find that new or evolving business drivers are better addressed through the adoption of JDeveloper and Oracle ADF. These new business drivers might be the need to move to a standards-based environment, new application delivery channels such as mobile, web services or Web2.0, or possibly the wish to follow Oracle's own technology choices with Oracle's new Fusion business applications.

Therefore, you may decide to make a strategic choice to evolve new application development to JDeveloper 11g and Oracle ADF, which provides a highly visual and declarative development environment that brings the productivity and ease of use of Oracle Forms to the Java EE platform. These new applications can be deployed to the same application server as the Forms and Reports applications, allowing them to share common infrastructure, SOA web services, BPEL workflows, data and PL/SQL stored procedures.

### **Develop new reports using BI Publisher**

Customers needing to create or make major updates to reports should take advantage of BI Publisher, which offers interactive management reports in addition to the wide range of formats and output destinations that they are familiar with in Oracle Reports. BI Publisher can also pull in data from a variety of source, including SOA web services; database procedures, spreadsheets, ERP/HR/CRM applications, and BPEL workflows.

With BI Publisher, report creation and modification extends to end users who can design reports in a web browser, or use familiar desktop tools such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, or

Adobe Acrobat. These reports can execute on the same application server as the Forms and Reports applications along with any applications built using JDeveloper.

## Recommendations for Oracle Customers Looking to Migrate from Forms and Reports

In some cases, there may exist a business driver to move existing applications from Oracle Forms to a different technology choice. For example, Oracle Forms may no longer be the ideal fit for the application requirements, or you may be adopting a strategy to consolidate disparate or heterogeneous development environments. For those who have a strong business imperative to migrate existing Oracle Forms and Reports applications, we offer the following recommendations:

For Oracle Forms or application development requirements that exhibit these characteristics:

- Extensive business rules or UI control logic in the application itself
- Need integration with and access to Fusion Applications or other 3<sup>rd</sup> party applications
- Need access to features provided by Oracle Fusion Middleware, such as BPM, BIP, WebCenter, and SOA
- For larger scale deployments where most of the processing time is in the application, and scalability is achieved by adding multiple middle tiers
- Larger development teams with requirements for complete development lifecycle support
- General preference to use Java/JEE technology

Oracle JDeveloper 11g with Oracle ADF is the tool of choice for building applications on Fusion Middleware. However, given the architectural difference between Java EE and Oracle Forms, Oracle has no plans to offer a complete migration solution that attempts to automatically migrate applications built with these tools to Java EE. Instead, Oracle's strategy is to provide a Java EE development environment exposing similar concepts, giving Forms developers the opportunity to become productive in a new, but familiar environment. We also provide specific documentation and training programs to enable Forms developers to quickly become proficient in JDeveloper and Oracle ADF.

For Oracle Forms customers with these characteristics:

- Most of the application logic is database resident PL/SQL
- For larger scale deployments, most of the processing time is in the database, and scalability is achieved by scaling up the database server
- Small development team with modest development lifecycle support requirements

- Do not have the skills or do not want to learn Java

Oracle Application Express (APEX) may provide a fit as it leverages PL/SQL for business logic scripting, and offers a productive environment for simple HTML forms.

See also the following article on application migration which discusses some of the challenges of migrating Oracle Forms applications to different technologies <http://www.oracle.com/technetwork/developer-tools/forms/documentation/formsmigration-133693.pdf>

For Oracle Reports customers looking to migrate to BI Publisher, Oracle BI Publisher includes a conversion utility to assist in the migration process.

## Conclusion

Oracle remains committed to the support of Oracle Forms and Reports. The support cycle is aligned to Oracle Fusion Middleware 11g for Forms and Reports and Oracle Developer Suite 10g for Oracle Designer. This continuation of support will allow customers to easily upgrade their applications to the web and benefit from the centralized deployment and shared services that the application server provides.

Given the rapid growth and adoption of Java/Java EE technologies in the industry, Oracle's strategy is also to provide a productive Java EE development environment (JDeveloper, Oracle ADF, and BI Publisher) allowing Forms, Reports and Designer customers to embrace Java EE development while still using a familiar RAD, visual and declarative approach.

Oracle recommends customers to web-deploy their existing Forms and Reports applications, consider the opportunities of new development in Java EE using JDeveloper, Oracle ADF, and BI Publisher, and integrate these applications together on Oracle Fusion Middleware, sharing common services and business logic.

With this strategy, Oracle allows customers to continue to leverage their existing investments for many years while offering a path to incrementally move to Java EE, at their own pace, using a productive and familiar development environment: JDeveloper and ADF, and BI Publisher.



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