IDC OPINION

In 2014, CIOs and IT managers are looking for new technology solutions and services that can help standardize the IT environment and improve overall IT service delivery to streamline business processes. IDC research regarding new technologies and support services has shown the following:

- **Adoption of integrated infrastructure and platforms has increased significantly and is expected to continue growing as a percentage of IT spend.** IDC hardware and services research has identified the following key drivers for integrated infrastructure and platforms: accelerating the business, lowering costs, simplifying IT, and reducing risk. As a result, IDC expects the percentage of general-purpose enterprise server, storage, networking, and management software spending for integrated infrastructure and platforms will increase from 10% in 2014 to 20% in 2020 (see *IDC Predictions 2014: Battles for Dominance – and Survival – on the 3rd Platform*, IDC #244606, December 2013).

- **Integrated infrastructure and platforms can present considerable support-related benefits for IT operations.** IDC expects that in addition to the many product and feature benefits, integrated infrastructure and platforms can deliver a less expensive support experience with higher availability. IDC also believes the most significant potential benefits can be realized through highly integrated support delivery that incorporates real-time monitoring and notification, advanced remote support delivery, and patch and update deployment services.

- **Oracle offers pre-integrated and pre-tested integrated infrastructure and platform systems with integrated advanced support delivery.** When customers purchase Oracle Exadata, Exalogic, and SuperCluster engineered systems, they receive Oracle Platinum Services at no additional charge with standard support coverage. Platinum Services features secure continuous connectivity for remote support delivery, including 24 x 7 fault monitoring, accelerated response times, and remote patch installation services.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Most enterprises rely on extensive IT infrastructures to support mission-critical business processes, increase employee productivity, and improve overall business performance. Unfortunately, these complex IT environments can present significant challenges when managing and optimizing IT operations. The majority of IT landscapes are an IT management nightmare: heterogeneous...
technologies with varying degrees of successful integrations, business processes supported by multiple solution providers that often lack support connectivity, custom solutions and integrations, and the dreaded hardware and software "sprawl."

In recent hardware and services research, IDC highlighted the following major challenges facing CIOs and IT managers in 2014:

- Fast and efficient deployment and integration of new technologies in the datacenter
- Simplification, standardization, and consolidation to optimize IT management and operations
- Maximum system performance and uptime to meet demanding internal and external SLAs
- Technology and services to modify IT service delivery quickly, efficiently, and effectively
- Effective cost management and resource allocation across the IT landscape

To maximize IT performance and achieve strategic advantage, CIOs and IT managers are considering new technologies to help streamline ongoing operations and improve IT service delivery.

**Integrated Infrastructure and Platforms in the Modern Datacenter**

In response to the previously mentioned challenges, vendors and solution providers are offering integrated infrastructure and platforms: pre-integrated, vendor-certified systems containing server hardware, disk storage systems, networking equipment, and basic element/systems management software. Integrated infrastructure systems are designed for general-purpose distributed workloads, while integrated platform systems are sold with additional pre-integrated packaged software and customized system engineering optimized to enable a specific workload.

Many potential benefits are associated with adopting integrated infrastructure and platforms. Key drivers include:

- Reduced time to revenue
- Lower costs
- Simplified maintenance
- Improved business continuity
- Reduced risk

IDC research indicates that the adoption rate of integrated infrastructure and platforms is increasing significantly and will continue to grow as a percentage of general-purpose enterprise server, storage, networking, and management software spend.

**Support Costs and Workload Reliability**

IDC research shows that the vast majority of integrated infrastructure and platforms support mission-critical applications. As a result, CIOs and IT managers are typically considering a higher level of support for these systems. IDC believes that moving from a siloed architecture to integrated
infrastructure and platforms can provide a less expensive support experience with higher availability (see Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**

Total Cost of Support and Availability by Architecture Type

- **Siloed Architecture**: Very large footprint, independent management tools and support contracts, multiple vendors, complex management with many assets.
- **Reference Architecture**: Reduced footprint, more common management tools, possibly multiple contracts but managed by one provider, multivendor solution.
- **Integrated Infrastructure and Platform Systems**: Small footprint, common management, single vendor, drives lower support costs, increased customer satisfaction with overall support an added benefit.

Source: IDC, 2014

**IT Resource Allocation and Optimization**

CIOs and IT managers are understandably looking to invest in solutions that can increase the amount of staff time spent on initiatives to drive business success through innovation and new projects. Integrated infrastructure and platforms have the potential to simplify maintenance, creating more efficiencies in IT workload management.

As part of recent IT workload research, IDC asked CIOs and IT managers to rank the percentage of total IT administration and operational staff time over a given week for a set of tasks across server, networking, and storage infrastructure. The results are displayed in Figure 2.
Almost 50% of IT staff time is devoted to the routine tasks of monitoring and troubleshooting as well as patching and configuration management. In the same survey, respondents indicated they expected integrated infrastructure and platforms will help conduct these tasks more efficiently.

**Key Support Considerations for Integrated Infrastructure**

While a number of potential benefits are associated with adopting integrated infrastructure and platforms, IDC expects the most significant potential benefits will be realized as part of ongoing operations and IT maintenance. IT organizations should evaluate how vendor support capabilities, such as integrated remote services, can help maximize availability and performance while lowering overall IT service delivery costs.

Specifically, IDC recommends that CIOs and IT managers look for the following components and deliverables as part of support and ongoing operations:

- **True integrated support delivery.** Support offerings for integrated infrastructure and platforms should take advantage of the system architecture to provide integrated support delivery across the system as a whole. This includes features such as problem identification diagnosis and resolution across hardware, software and networking components, automated service requests across the system, and ongoing IT operations management and optimization strategies. IDC also recommends ensuring an integrated support delivery process during problem diagnosis and resolution to avoid extended wait times because of multiple handoffs.
- **Advanced remote support deliverables.** Integrated infrastructure and platform support should also include a robust set of automated advanced remote support deliverables to help maximize system performance and minimize downtime. Specifically, IDC recommends looking for comprehensive monitoring with problem identification, diagnosis, and resolution — including real-time monitoring and alerts.

- **Patch deployment services.** As demonstrated in the previously mentioned survey data, patching and configuration management for mission-critical technology can require significant resources to ensure ongoing performance and security. Patch deployment services can help reduce the risk of unplanned downtime and improve the maintenance process for busy IT personnel. IDC recommends looking for patch deployment services built into support deliverables, featuring integrated, pre-tested configurations that apply across the technology stack.

- **Advanced security protocols.** As remote support delivery becomes increasingly important for IT organizations, support for integrated infrastructure and platforms should include detailed, high-level security technology and processes. IDC recommends looking for providers with advanced protocols that will meet highly regulated and company-specific access rules.

### ORACLE PLATINUM SERVICES FOR ORACLE ENGINEERED SYSTEMS

Oracle's integrated infrastructure and platform systems, called "engineered systems," feature best-of-breed hardware and software designed to work together. The components are pre-integrated, pre-tested, and optimized for performance and supportability as a single, complete system. Oracle engineered systems are designed to support unpredictable workloads such as cloud computing and are optimized to run Oracle applications.

Oracle Exadata, Exalogic, and SuperCluster engineered systems also include advanced support delivery services at no additional cost within Oracle's standard support program. Featuring secure continuous connectivity to deliver monitoring, diagnosis, restoration, and patching services, Oracle Platinum Services is designed to help customers realize the potential benefits of engineered systems during ongoing operations. Platinum Services includes a number of advanced support capabilities, such as:

- **24 x 7 remote fault monitoring.** Oracle engineers with expertise in Exadata, Exalogic, and SuperCluster technology provide 24 x 7 remote fault monitoring for all aspects of the systems. Continuous connectivity helps these remote engineers respond quickly to any fault alerts, which are automatically filtered to focus on critical events.

In an interview with IDC, Predrag Sancanin, assistant IT director with the Agency for Identification Documents, Registers and Data Exchange of Bosnia and Herzegovina (IDDEEA), stated that "the main difference with Oracle Platinum Services is that our system is monitored 24 x 7. In fact, the automated event notification and automated service requests even surprised us on several occasions to avoid potential issues. Oracle Support was well known to our team, but adding Oracle Platinum Services is an extra level of insurance."

"Oracle Platinum Services is like having another set of eyes on the systems that can help us be proactive, almost like staff augmentation," said Brad Salva, database team manager, Southwestern Energy.

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**Accelerated response times.** Platinum Services customers receive 5-minute fault notifications via email from Oracle and have direct access to up-to-date system telemetry and service activity via the Oracle Advanced Support Portal. If a Priority 1 service request is filed, customers receive 15-minute restoration or escalation to Development. If the issue is not resolved within 30 minutes of opening the service request, a joint debugging session is held with Development to drive to a conclusion.

Asked about this feature, Brad Salva, database team manager at Southwestern Energy, said that "automated service requests generated through Oracle Platinum Services and the quick response times are very helpful to speed problem resolution. Oracle Support has immediate access to our environment, so diagnosis and resolution can start right away."

**Remote patch installation.** Oracle Platinum Services includes patch installation services, where Oracle support personnel conduct proactive health checks to assess gaps in known best practice configurations. They then work with customers to plan and deploy pre-tested patch bundles remotely to covered systems up to four times per year.

When asked about his experiences with Oracle's remote patch deployments, Sancanin stated, "Patching is an unknown process and can present risks to system performance and functionality. Oracle Platinum Services offers additional security during the patching process, both because of the patching services and the standard configurations and processes for engineered systems."

Oracle delivers these remote support capabilities to Platinum Services customers via the Oracle Advanced Support Gateway, which serves as a secure, single point of access for the provision and delivery of Oracle services. With this mix of advanced support deliverables, Oracle Platinum Services is designed to help customers reduce the complexity and resource requirements to help maintain top performance for Oracle engineered systems.

As stated by Salva, "It really helps knowing that high-level serious issues will catch the eyes of the Oracle Platinum Services team. With the ongoing notifications and the automated service requests, we are getting a lot out of Oracle Platinum Services, and what we're getting is very good."

**FUTURE OUTLOOK**

As CIOs and IT managers face pressure to improve IT service delivery and meet the needs of business managers, they will increasingly look for new solutions that can accelerate new innovations and improve overall IT service delivery. IDC expects that with the expansion of integrated infrastructure and platform solutions, the adoption of standard configurations, and the promised potential benefits, customers will hold support providers to a very high standard of service delivery in the future.
CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES

IDC believes that Oracle can help customers realize the benefits of Platinum Services by extending key capabilities across the entire Oracle hardware and software stack. Customers are deploying integrated infrastructure and platform systems to simplify IT management and lower operating costs. Savvy IT organizations are also moving away from asset-based support and looking for business process support to meet their SLAs. Oracle can help customers achieve this difficult goal even more quickly by expanding the scope of the systems and components covered under Platinum Services.

IDC also expects that Oracle will help customers recognize and articulate the value of integrated infrastructure and platform systems through Platinum Services. While these systems and the associated support program can deliver better performance and availability, decreased IT complexity, and lower operational costs, these benefits may not be easily quantifiable for most IT organizations. IDC expects that to help customers understand the value of these systems and services in complex IT environments, Oracle will continue showing customers tangible, compelling evidence. CIOs and IT managers should look for specific customer references and stories that can help explain the demonstrated results in ongoing IT operations.

However, IDC expects that Oracle could also face challenges as it expands the customer base for integrated infrastructure and platform systems and Platinum Services. As the market continues to grow, Oracle will need to stay focused on maintaining a high level of service delivery for Oracle Platinum Services. IDC expects the delivery model for scaling advanced support services such as quarterly patching could be resource intensive. Customers should understand the details behind how Oracle will deliver Platinum Services and what level of service they can expect to receive.

Finally, IDC believes that Oracle will see increased competition in integrated support packaging and delivery as customers consider alternatives to integrated infrastructure and platform systems. Many CIOs and IT managers are hesitant to adopt a single provider model, preferring a heterogeneous datacenter with multiple vendors. IDC expects support providers will continue efforts to deliver integrated support across multiple technologies—including hardware, software, networking equipment, and even cloud solutions. In addition, support deliverables will go beyond integrated policies and processes to include advanced support technologies and remote connectivity across multiple support providers. Although integrated support delivery will remain challenging for these providers, the multi-vendor integrated support offerings could present a suitable alternative for CIOs and IT managers who prefer heterogeneous IT environments to integrated infrastructure and platform systems.

CONCLUSION

CIOs and IT managers are struggling to balance the pressures of maintaining high-quality IT service delivery and improving adoption and utilization while accelerating innovation that can directly impact the bottom line. Streamlining and optimizing ongoing IT operations in these complex IT landscapes will continue to present significant challenges for resource-strapped IT organizations.

As such, IDC expects enterprises will increasingly consider integrated infrastructure and platform systems and services to simplify IT, lower overall cost, and accelerate business success. IDC also
anticipates IT organizations will look to support providers to help realize the potential performance and cost benefits in ongoing operations. IDC believes that offerings like Oracle's engineered systems paired with Oracle Platinum Services can help customers looking for new solutions to optimize application performance, simplify and standardize ongoing IT operations, improve overall IT service delivery, and reduce the resources required to support the IT landscape.
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