

Oracle's Autonomous Data Warehouse Enhancements: "Democratizing Simplicity"

by Mark Peters, on Mar 22, 2021

So, here's the thing – regardless of how complex or simple IT is to manage and to run, it's still all-too-often the aegis of just the IT department; and that's especially true of data lakes, marts, or warehouses, call them what you will. That's not to say regular non-IT users can't and don't consume the valuable outputs from these endeavors (of course they do, that's the point), but anything new is invariably only achieved with the necessary involvement of highly trained and skilled help – DBAs, system administrators—IT personnel of some sort.

Oracle has already moved the needle dramatically on the IT side of the data warehousing equation, with its self-driving, converged, scale/consume-at-will, pay-only-for-what-you-use Autonomous Data Warehouse (ADW). This, if you will, addresses the *production* side of things; but now its latest enhancements are designed to address the *consumption* side of things. What does that mean? In the pleasingly plain language of the Oracle Live announcement¹, it means Oracle is "adding a whole bunch of self-service tools to make business analysts, developers, and data scientists more productive."

"Self-service" is the key word here. As individual consumers, we can all do pretty sophisticated things via web and mobile apps; we know what we want and we are happy to get instant gratification, but we need only deal with inputs (usually data and questions) and outputs (answers and insights), not worrying about how the "magic" happens. Now apply that same kind of thinking to business analysts, developers, and data scientists working with their data warehouses; rather than pose their requirements to IT and await their turn, they can now work directly -- using Oracle's easy, no-code self-service tools -- with their organizations' data to derive more value from it, simply and faster.

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This can be viewed as democratizing organizational data warehouses, making it easy for pretty-much-anyone to get data in and value out. These business users are now *directly connected* to the data rather than *one step removed* from it and can leverage the new tools in easy and familiar ways: There are drag-and-drop UIs and low-code interfaces that simplify everything from data loading, transformation, and analysis to building machine learning models. Competitive approaches still often demand expertise, may use additional third-party tools (which incurs costs and requires learning), and can require manually retrieving data from external databases...all of which conspires to keep the non-technical *consumers* of the data warehouses' riches at arm's length from the *production* side of things.

¹Quotation is from Andy Mendlesohn, EVP, Oracle Database Server Technologies in the public Oracle Live announcement webcast 03/17/21

It's worth noting that these new Oracle capabilities can only work however because Oracle has already done so much to address the foundational production side of the house. *This is not some additional layer of simultaneous translation (with its risks of error, omission, and delay), it is instead allowing direct communication.*

Back to the topic of simplicity that I mentioned up front. It's always tempting to start writing about IT in a "highfalutin" fashion, as if linguistic complexity somehow bestows value. I could tell you (deep breath...) that these Oracle ADW enhancements empower a disparate mix of personas and organizational innovators with contemporary self-service data management capabilities, based off and built upon Oracle's enterprise class, self-driving and highly productive integrated suite of abilities that operate in Oracle's converged database ecosystem, and which can be consumed wherever, however, and at whatever scale individual organizations want, with security, analytics, scalability and application integration all built in. (You can breathe out now). And that's all true. But the simple version is far better – these new ADW tools democratize the access, use, value, and flexibility of organizational data warehouses, so that regular business people can easily drive faster insights, make better decisions and achieve better business results.

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What does all this mean, aside from the obvious functional value of the new capabilities? Well, it's an important step for Oracle, and one that's squarely aimed at an audience outside its DBA comfort zone. The AWS/Redshifts and Snowflakes of the world are increasingly cozy with business analysts and – albeit sometimes more aspirational than real – data scientists and the like. Oracle's powerful DNA and capabilities in its "everything-database" of course mean that this is a very low risk exercise, but with the potential for high rewards. To reap those high rewards, a key part of its strategy needs to be not just going toe-to-toe on these new capabilities (some of which arguably its competitors have too) but ensuring its new target users fully appreciate the wonders and value of Oracle's foundational converged and autonomous back-end—which unarguably its competitors do not have...and which of course, in turn, adds value to the overall package.

How does it do that? It avoids corporate stuffiness and obfuscations. Thus, it should not be "advanced, simplified, and integrated business functionalities for a multitude of personas to optimally synthesize and integrate with Oracle's comprehensive autonomous enterprise data warehouse ecosystem." And, thus, it is why I was so pleased to instead hear it summarized as "a whole bunch of self-service tools to make business analysts, developers, and data scientists more productive".² Both phrasings make sense; but the latter gives Oracle its optimum route to win the hearts and minds of data consumers and gain market share from both its established and new competitors.

This is a reprint – with permission – of a blog that was originally posted on esg-global.com on 3/22/2021

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