

BMC upgrades cloud management products and tweaks application performance

Analyst: Rachel Chalmers

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BMC Software has unveiled major new features in its Cloud Lifecycle Management (CLM) and Cloud Operations Management products. The company has also tackled application performance management (APM) with new features in its End User Experience Management and a homegrown Application Diagnostics tool. Three of these four are based on acquisitions, reflecting the steps this venerable company has taken to adapt to a dynamic and changing enterprise IT software market. Customers say they're saving money and getting more use out of their systems with the BMC products.

The 451 Take

BMC's self-transformation dates back several years now, and CLM is perhaps the most significant achievement yet of a new, post-BladeLogic generation of senior managers who are urging the old guard to pay attention to the cloud. BMC has to be careful. Its revenue from selling software into mainframe environments is still very significant indeed, and BMC can't afford to jettison that trust fund or to tarnish its brand. But at age two, CLM is getting good reviews and repeat business. Small wonder that BMC is styling other offerings aimed at the same early-cloud-adopter, mainframe-less customers on the successful CLM template.

Technology

When BMC launched CLM in 2010, the product was the logical application of BladeLogic's

provisioning automation techniques to the enterprise cloud environments BMC hoped would be its future. CLM dynamically provisioned a services stack – server, network and storage allotments plus applications – across more or less any hardware and virtualization platform you'd expect to find in a modern enterprise datacenter. A catalog provided role-based access to services, a portal allowed users to request resources and workflows helped to enforce compliance policies and spin up monitoring tools across the whole architecture. CLM did well and by mid-2011, BMC had added a policy engine and blueprints.

In version 3.0, CLM moves up the stack with support for SaaS request and provisioning. The product has been integrated with BMC's database automation (based on the acquisition of GridApp) and middleware automation (based on the purchase of Phurnace Software). Remember we noted that versions 1 and 2 ran across more or less any platform? The latest version adds the most notable of those that were absent: IBM LPARS. Intriguingly, CLM 3.0 also plays nicely with VMware's vCloud Director, VMware's own automation play. Other new features include integrated metering for chargeback and a cleaner shopping cart model for the UI.

If CLM is BladeLogic adapted for the cloud, Cloud Operations Management is the cloud phase of ProactiveNet and Neptunus. Now in v9, the integrated product offers administrators visibility into their cloud resources through a cloud panorama and enhanced cloud, datacenter and network container capacity views. ProactiveNet Performance Management was admired for its performance, root cause, event and impact analytics, and Neptunus added capacity analytics; those features are now available for both pooled virtual and cloud resources. They have also been extended to handle storage, vBlock and salesforce.com resources. Like CLM, Cloud Operations Management uses automated workflows, in its case to monitor cloud services as soon as they are deployed and to automate chargeback reports, triage and repair.

To address APM issues in cloud environments, BMC added an integrated APM console, tighter integration with the Atrium CMDB and a performance analytics engine to its End User Experience Management product. The company also added Application Diagnostics, purpose-built for the cloud and able to perform application deep dives on end-user transactions. Of course, the ability to do this is usually only unleashed forensically, because deep diving into a live application has turned out to be a great way to bring that application grinding to a halt. BMC argues that its take on Application Diagnostics employs low-overhead, self-configuring agents.

Customers

The company is reporting happy customers. European and Latin American systems integrator Indra

has been using the Cloud Management software to reduce time to market from months to days. It also finds that it is getting more use out of its hardware and software while managing them ever more efficiently. Compliance and the legal enforcement of security policies across 40,000 employees in 118 locations is now much easier and therefore far less expensive. Global services firm HCL Technologies and European travel group TUI AG report similar findings.

Competition

In a 451 CloudScape report, *Conducting the Cloud: Orchestration*, we put the lepidopterist's magnifying glass over CLM's competitors. The big four enterprise systems management vendors – IBM, Hewlett-Packard and CA Technologies alongside BMC – are all working hard to adapt their existing automation and operations management suites for cloud environments, with varying success. BMC itself reports that it has been tending the wounds of HP burn victims for some time, and that some CA casualties are also beginning to seek it out. Among newcomers, Gale Technologies and ServiceMesh may be the most intriguing.

In predictive analytics, Cloud Operations Management faces longtime rivals Netuitive and VMware vCenter Operations Management, which is based on Integrien. It also encounters upstarts like tiny Prelert; application performance vendors now venturing into root cause analysis such as eG Innovations and OPNET Technologies; their rivals in turn, Quest Software, ScienceLogic, SolarWinds, Splunk, uptime software, Veeam Software and Zenoss; as well as a host of new monitoring and operations startups such as AccelOps, AppDynamics, BlueStripe Software, CopperEgg, VMTurbo and Xangati. BMC's Application Diagnostics adds the deep-dive capability for which CA's Wily Technology was once best known. Fewer of these can match Cloud Operations Management in capacity analytics, where its feature set is more like those of a CiRBA or VKernel (now part of Dell via its Quest acquisition).

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

BMC can offer platform-agnostic management software across the mainframe, client/server, distributed systems, Web applications, virtual environments and now the cloud – a track record few can match.

Opportunities

Enterprises won't jettison their investments in big iron and custom applications, but they also need pathways to agile and mobile development. BMC is well-placed to support their legacy kit while smoothing their path to the cloud.

Weaknesses

Despite the efforts of a new generation of leaders, the Texan company is still identified with its mainframe heritage. It's hard to turn an aircraft carrier.

Threats

Splunk, freshly public, has no limit to its ambition, while VMware is spending billions to stay ahead of its competition. Those younger rivals will battle BMC from below even as BMC itself wrests opportunities out of the hands of behemoths HP and IBM.

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