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SupportNews

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DELIVERING PREMIUM SUPPORT TO PREMIUM CUSTOMERS

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Providing support has never been a one-size-fits-all proposition, and as the computing environments of key customers become more complex and diverse, custom solutions are increasingly the best fit.

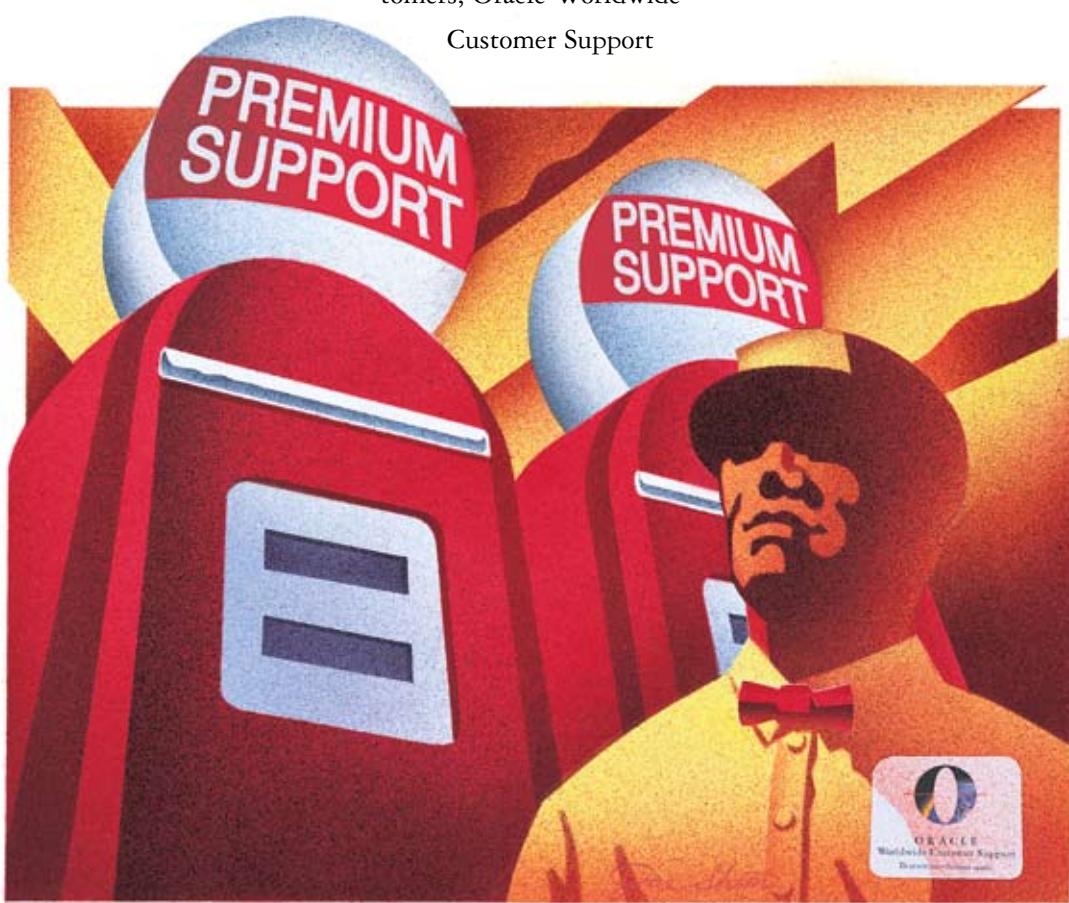
To accommodate such customers, Oracle Worldwide Customer Support

(WWCS) offers a range of services that are either entirely or partly delivered on-site at the customer's premises. These "premium" services consist of support from Large Systems Support (LSS), the Center of Expertise (COE), on-site support, and the OracleGOLD service offering.

Defining the Premium Customer

Many customers meet all their support requirements through a combination of electronic support, such as that provided by OracleMERCURY and OracleMetaLink, and telephone support, such as that provided through the OracleSILVER and

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Large Systems Support Tests 10,000-User Configurations

Oracle Large Systems Support (LSS) formed the Odyssey project team to improve the supportability of client/server applications through large-scale, production-realistic testing. The Odyssey team has recently announced the capability to model and simulate up to 10,000 users in

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Supporting the Spectrum

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Support programs and services for “premium” customers of Oracle Worldwide Customer Support (WWCS) are the theme of this quarter’s issue of *SupportNews*. “Delivering Premium Support to Premium Customers” on page 1 offers an overview of our approach to this market segment. Yet, as Randy Baker points out in his article on page 3, providing services for large enterprise customers with global operations helps Oracle deliver more efficient, higher-quality support to all its customers—regardless of their size or the complexity of their computing environment. Consistency is a key to providing high-quality support for global customers, and “Creating a Global Support Personality,” on page 10, describes our work in standardizing procedures and systems worldwide so our global customers can consistently receive superior service, regardless of where or when they contact us.

For customers implementing a system with thousands of users, testing the system in order to minimize risks has long been prohibitively costly and complex. To find out how WWCS’s Large Systems Support (LSS) Center is changing that, see the article on page 1.

If you’re interested in hearing more about the LSS program, you might consider attending International Oracle Users Week in Dallas. WWCS will be presenting two technical papers on the LSS Center at the conference, where the curriculum is focused on solutions-oriented technical education. See page 9 for more details.

I hope you enjoy this third issue of the new *SupportNews*. I’d like to invite you to tell us what you think of the publication by sending comments directly to me at mkure@us.oracle.com. As a reader, you are our customer for this newsletter, and any ideas you have on how to improve it are welcome.

Thanks for reading!

Michael M. Kure
Editor, *SupportNews*



TURNING CUSTOM SERVICES INTO STANDARD SERVICES

by Randy Baker, Senior Vice President, Oracle Worldwide Customer Support

Several articles in this issue of *SupportNews* mention "premium customers," the largest, most global, most complex customers of Oracle Worldwide Customer Support. To meet the needs of these customers, we develop special services, like the Large Systems Support Center, the OracleONSITE service offering, OracleGOLD, and custom support programs. While premium customers are the initial beneficiaries of these programs, all our customers benefit in the near term from the technology and practices we put in place to make possible the premium services we deliver.

Supporting the Full Spectrum

Because our goal is to ensure our customers' business success, we strive to learn all we can about the industries our customers are in and how Oracle technology can make each customer more efficient, productive and profitable. In particular, we are always trying to anticipate how a customer's business is changing, so we can be ready with new services as the need for them arises.

The consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry is a case in point. Business imperatives for the industry include lowering operating costs, growing



revenues and building "quality" share, and increasing responsiveness to change. A new business model—electronic commerce—will help CPG organizations simplify processes and achieve those goals. Tied to those business imperatives are a set of technology imperatives, such as the need to connect and converse with trading partners and consumers, provide data with meaning, and provide best-in-class solutions. To meet the challenge of those imperatives, the CPG industry needs more powerful software and robust networking and communications technology to deal with the additional load and more sophisticated demands. Supporting such advanced technology has required us

to expand the skill sets of our employees, install a systems infrastructure designed to deliver targeted solutions faster, and standardize best practices to consistently deliver the highest level of service.

Who benefits from those enhancements? Only CPG organizations and other premium customers? Far from it. More skillful, knowledgeable support analysts mean faster, better solutions for all customers; improved systems infrastructure means streamlined call distribution and routing, shorter hold times, and complete solutions delivered more efficiently; and standardized practices mean it becomes easier for customers

of all sizes to work with Oracle WWCS around the world.

Something for Everyone

Some services developed for premium customers, such as OracleONSITE, will most likely not be used by other customers. Other services, in particular electronic support services such as OracleMERCURY and OracleMetaLink, are used by customers across the spectrum. Yet the quality of these electronic services is enhanced by WWCS's work with premium customers, because the knowledge WWCS gains about industries and computing environments through programs such as OracleONSITE is incorporated into the knowledgebases for electronic support services—knowledgebases that customers of all sizes access and rely on.

Our goal is offer a range of support offerings flexible enough to meet the needs of all customers. By developing programs that fit premium customers, we enhance our ability to create services that fit customers of all sizes. As we continuously improve our ability to deliver such "custom" services, we continuously enhance the value of our support to all our customers, no matter what their size. ■

DELIVERING PREMIUM SUPPORT

continued from page 1

OracleBRONZE offerings. But many customers with demanding development and production environments find that “remote” support is not enough. Their environments are typically large, complex, centralized, and distributed, and the performance of their applications is critical to achieving their business mission. Such customers need a faster response, a faster resolution, optimum systems availability, and a custom support program that offers proactive support planning and continuous operations support. To deliver it, Oracle WWCS offers premium services.

“Maintaining high availability of the product stack in the open systems environment requires a close partnership between Oracle and other vendors,” says Kelly Banks, Senior Director, Premium Support Services. “It also requires a very close business relationship with our customers.”

Banks also emphasizes the importance of long-term support for premium customers. “We deliver what

we call ‘customer life cycle support,’ that is, we have the capability to support a customer’s application software development effort throughout its life cycle, from design to testing to implementation to

guidelines, operations practices, and deliverable services that assure system reliability. (See LSS articles on pages 1 and 13.)

► *The Center of Expertise (COE), which solves techni-*

analysts at more than 70 customer organizations.

► OracleGOLD support service, which includes such on-site support activities as conducting account reviews, creating detailed support plans, creating site reference documents, and serving as the customer’s advocate within Oracle.

“When Oracle WWCS first talked to customers in this premium market, they told us we would need three things to become their vendor of choice,” says Banks. “First, we would need leading-edge products—which we do indeed have. Second, project and implementation services—which we offer through Oracle Services. And third, world-class support. We have succeeded in building that capability. Our premium support services, coupled with the capabilities of the Global Service Centers and the Local Service Centers, add up to a world-class support offering. The result is our ability to meet the support requirements of customers operating the most complex and diverse systems.” ■



production. And throughout the process, we continuously monitor the supportability of the production environment.”

Premium Service Offerings

Premium services offered by Oracle WWCS are:

► *The Large Systems Support* program, which mitigates the risk in implementing unproven system configurations. The LSS staff works closely with customers and vendors to characterize and understand areas of risk, then develop a risk mitigation plan of implementation

cal problems that require special expertise. Analysts from the COE work both at the customer’s site and at Oracle to diagnose and solve the most difficult problems.

► *The ONSITE Support* organization, which consists of the Oracle on-site analysts who enhance Oraclemetal support programs by working on-site at customer premises to provide in-depth technical support. The analysts provide proactive support account management, specific technical product support, and operations assistance. Oracle WWCS currently has on-site

New Bug Definitions Improve Communications

To improve communications between Oracle WWCS and Oracle Americas customers, Oracle has been working with both customers and partners to write uniform definitions for Technical Assistance Request (TAR) and Bug Severity.

These definitions are published in the new U.S. Guide to Customer Support. The list of definitions has been posted online at http://support.oracle.com/support_guide under Chapter 2: Contacting Customer Support, under the heading "Severity Levels." Customers may access and download the list at any time for their reference.

The goal of creating the definitions is to improve communications, which can in turn improve Oracle's service response and efficiency, and can reduce the impact that problems with Oracle products have on a customer's business.



Using the Definitions

When a customer contacts WWCS, the customer and the support analyst will be able to use the severity definitions to understand the technical and business impact of the problem. As always, the customer will be the expert on the business impact.

Four levels of severity are defined for generic problems and four levels for applications problems, with Severity 1 being the most serious problem.

The following generic severity definition for a Severity 2 problem is an example: *Severity 2—Problem/product defect causes an internal (software) error, or incorrect behavior causing a severe loss of service.*

No customer-acceptable workaround is available, however, operations can continue in a restricted fashion.



The problem/defect has one or more of the following characteristics:

- ◆ Internal software error, causing the system to fail, but restart or recovery is possible
- ◆ Severely degraded performance due to software error
- ◆ Some important functionality is unavailable, yet the system can continue to operate in a restricted fashion

"We urge customers to use these severity definitions to help us solve their problems," says Gene

DeKoster, Vice President, WWCS Americas. "Doing that will help us reach our mutual goal of minimizing the impact of the problem on their business." ■



"We urge customers to use these severity definitions to help us solve their problems."
Gene DeKoster, Vice President, WWCS Americas



THE SUPPORT STORY AROUND THE WORLD

Customized Support in India



The TATA Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) in India—the largest automobile manufacturing company in the country—has used Oracle software extensively since 1980 and has long been one of Oracle India's largest customers.

At its five locations, TELCO has experienced developers and database administrators who have developed applications on Oracle for Material Management, Production Planning and Control, Financial Accounting, Costing, Marketing, Sales Management, Share Accounting, and Human Resources. All told, the company has some 375 users of development tools on various platforms, such as IBM RS/6000, ICL DRS/6000, Silicon Graphics, Intel and NEC.

In 1996, to streamline the process of renewing technical support contracts, Oracle and TELCO decided to consolidate all licenses bought by TELCO over the past five years. TELCO has bought more than 1300 Oracle RDBMS licenses during that period. After two months, Oracle and

TELCO arrived at a final count of licenses, and agreed on a customized service offering that takes into account TELCO's multi-location installations.

The new service contract between Oracle and TELCO is based on Oracle BRONZE support, but has the following additions:

- Six days of on-site service at four locations, which includes an introduction to new products and features, tuning tips, and installation assistance.
- A commitment to making an on-site visit to any location to solve a problem that can't be solved using Oracle electronic support services.
- An Oracle account manager for TELCO who will work with all TELCO sites and monitor the resolution of all support-related issues.

The new TELCO contract with Oracle WWCS represents another example of Oracle's global effort to bring value to high-end enterprise customers and provide support solutions that fit each organization's unique needs.

Server Technologies Engineering Expertise in EMEA



Customers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) reporting software faults with Server Technologies products will now benefit from

the responsiveness and expertise of the Server Technologies Sustaining Engineering Group. Beginning April 1, the group will be operating in the U.K. Global Support Center (GSC), providing immediate access to engineering skills during the working days of EMEA customers.

Locating engineering skills together with Customer Support eliminates communication delays between Engineering and Support, immediately speeding up the response to customers reporting software faults. Improved communications can be of particular help during the critical first phase in bug resolution (which is also often the longest phase)—the process of constructing a well-formed bug description.

The group consists of Kevin Quinn, Mark Greaves, Nick Ireland and Andrew Gardner, with Bernard van Duijnen assisting part-time. They will handle software faults reported against the Oracle RDBMS and server languages. All team members have extremely strong technical backgrounds in software engineering, porting and support. In addition, each team member has specialized skills that will be used to reinforce and back-up skills found in the U.S.-based Server Technologies Engineering team.

New German Phone System Delivers Faster Access to Analysts



To give customers faster access to support analysts, Oracle Germany has implemented a Computer Telephone Integrated System for incoming support calls.

Customers calling during business hours will be prompted to enter their CSI number via the phone keypad. The telephone system checks the number against the database containing records of support customers.

If the CSI is registered, the caller hears a phone menu offering a choice of support services.

The current menu structure is:

1. Log a new request
2. Callback on an open request
3. Close a request
4. Fax information to an open request
5. Software update request

Depending on the caller's choice, further processing will lead to further prompts. Here is a sample sequence of events for a Callback on an Open Request (option 2):

Customer calls	CSI is required
Customer types in CSI	CSI is validated
Upon successful validation	Technical Assistance Request number is required
Customer types in Technical Assistance Request number	Technical Assistance Request number is validated against CSI
Upon successful validation	Routine identifies the analyst who owns the request

Call is routed directly to the analyst

Customer receives support help

The new system will reduce hold times for calls to German support. The integrated use of the telephone system with support's internal database makes the process of call identification independent of the number of concurrent calls.

In addition to these advantages, the new system tracks data on hold times, call time, the number of abandoned calls, and more details, thus providing the ability to allocate resources to deliver the best possible service at any time of the day.

Based on this technology, further enhancements will be implemented, one of which will be a fax service for technical articles, such as technical bulletins and alerts, regarding the use of Oracle products. ■

ORACLE AND COMPAQ SIGN NEW GLOBAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT AGREEMENT

Oracle and Compaq Corporation signed a Global Technical Support Agreement (GTSA) in December 1996 that has enabled both companies to better support customers running Oracle software on Compaq platforms. The GTSA is specifically designed to meet customers' growing needs to support their distributed enterprise computing environments.

The new agreement, which builds on an alliance that began four years ago, ensures that each company's technical support organization will engage the other when necessary to resolve customer problems.

Highlights of the agreement include:

- ◆ Designated technical support contacts within each company who will facilitate communication between Oracle and Compaq
- ◆ Mutual training of technical support analysts within Oracle and Compaq to enable both companies to identify issues related to the other company's products and services
- ◆ Shared access to each other's technical support databases. Both companies have use of information from the other's repositories to respond to issues from joint customers.

The support agreement links the companies' technical support centers around the world, creating an alliance that provides around-the-clock, mission-critical service on a global basis. The agreement enhances a previously established partnership between Oracle and Compaq via TSANet, an alliance of hardware and software vendors offering support services in the U.S. and Europe. ■





You always have to prove something to someone

Performance Awareness proved we're the best

Oracle's Large System Support (LSS) Center must prove application scalability in the most complex environments for Oracle's largest, most demanding client/server customers. Performance Awareness provides the testing solutions to prove this scalability.

Understanding the importance of scaling client/server applications to thousands of users, Oracle's LSS organization created a \$20 million customer center that includes high-

performance/high-capacity UNIX® systems from leading vendors such as Digital™, HP, IBM®, Sequent, and Sun®. The current challenge to test thousands of online database users and accurately simulate this complex client/server environment is formidable.

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Performance Awareness provides the performance testing products and services to make this job manageable. The pre-Vue™ product line is made up of integrated cross-platform products that genuinely test enterprise-wide applications... making it the most accurate and scalable solution in the performance testing business. But don't take our word for it, let us prove it.

Contact us at: 800-849-4562, 919-870-8800, info@PACorp.com, <http://www.PACorp.com>. For information on Oracle's Large Systems Support contact Oracle at <http://www.oracle.com> or sup_mktg@us.oracle.com.



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PIC Program Reduces Support Calls

The Product Improvement Consultants (PIC) program, begun in fall 1996 as a joint venture between Oracle Product Development (PD) and WWCS, is finding ways to reduce customer support calls. Fewer customer issues will allow all areas within Oracle to spend more resources on new products and other proactive efforts.

The program's approach starts with pairing teams from PD and WWCS who work on high-call-volume product areas. The current areas of focus within the U.S. are RDBMS, SQL*Net, GL, and Forms. The teams analyze the highest call categories, collaborate on ways to remedy the root cause of the calls, and implement changes to improve the quality of Oracle products. The idea is that by improving product quality, customers will experience fewer problems and will need to call WWCS less often.

The PIC program has already produced results. For example, in the RDBMS product area, customers often call for help on backup/recovery questions. The RDBMS PIC team documented the most common backup/recovery problem scenarios and solutions and published them on the *MetaLink* web service. *MetaLink* is a free service to all *GOLD*, *SILVER*, and *BRONZE* customers, who may register for the service at <http://www.oracle.com/support>. There is a wealth of information, including information provided by PIC, at this site. Many customers with backup/recovery questions may now find answers via *MetaLink* and avoid calling Oracle support.

PIC teams are currently studying other high-call-volume product areas from around the world (like HR and CASE in the U.K.) to find more ways to improve product quality. ■

INTERNATIONAL ORACLE USERS WEEK OFFERS SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED ORACLE EDUCATION

Database administrators, developers, designers, and consultants interested in a conference offering solutions-oriented technical education should mark their calendars for the 16th Annual International Oracle Users Week (IOUW) '97 to be held at the Dallas Convention Center in Dallas from April 27 through May 2.

The sponsor of the conference is the International Oracle Users Group-Americas (IOUG-A), an independent organization of users of Oracle products and services. Through the conference and

other programs, the IOUG-A fosters a cooperative, industry-wide partnership with support and participation from Oracle Corporation, Oracle-related technology vendors, and other Oracle local, regional, and special-interest user groups.

The IOUW '97 curriculum is unique because it has been designed by and for users. The goal is to give attendees practical solutions to take home and implement immediately. Members of the user commu-



nity will lead the more than 200 technical sessions slated for IOUW '97. Each session is ranked by level of difficulty—beginner,

intermediate, and advanced. Additional mini-lessons, vendor forums, specially planned networking events, and DBA certification testing complement the technical sessions, providing attendees with a comprehensive learning experience.

In addition to formal sessions, the conference and

exhibition will offer attendees many networking opportunities to learn from and build relationships with other Oracle users.

Detailed information on all IOUW '97 venues, specific program information, and technical session abstracts are posted on the IOUG-A web site, www.ioug.org. To talk with IOUG-A about membership or be added to the IOUG-A database, please call the headquarters office at 312/245-1579. Or call the IOUW '97 fax back information service at 800/580-4689. ■

CREATING A GLOBAL

Oracle software is increasingly an integral part of our premium customers' mission-critical business applications, and these customers are increasingly operating on a global basis. To obtain maximum system availability and performance, customers need Oracle WWCS to provide consistent, high-quality support to all their locations and all their environments. Recognizing the urgency of that need, WWCS has created a new function, *Global Services Planning and Implementation (GSPI)*, headed by Vice President Mike Mayfield.



SUPPORT PERSONALITY

Developing a Value Chain Approach

"A key change in becoming a globally coordinated organization that provides 'best of breed' customer support is switching from a functional or departmental orientation to a service value chain orientation," says Mayfield. "That will result in our placing the emphasis on optimizing workflow and supporting information systems infrastructures throughout Oracle support in order to deliver maximum value to our customers."

Changes in the "follow-the-sun" process of handling service requests from international customers provide an example of the new approach. When current customers with 24x7 service call in a service request after hours, that request is transferred to different service centers in different geographies.

Because not all centers have the same support infrastructure and procedures, customers may feel they are working with different organizations. To remedy that, WWCS is implementing common global processes supported by enhanced information systems. In the near future, those systems will automate functions and place customers

in control of interacting with Oracle.

"In addition," says Mayfield, "we are shifting from *supporting products* to *serving customers* as the basis for our service model. We are committed to becoming more effective at supporting our customers' mission-critical environments by improving the depth of our capabilities in supporting Oracle products while leveraging our key industry partnerships to be able to offer complete support solutions.

Our premium services, with

their on-site service components, are moving in that direction. We are working hard to build and implement capabilities that will help our customers manage the complexity and availability of their business-critical applications environments."

Implementing New Global Services

To improve the reliability, availability and serviceability of Oracle products, GSPI is collaborating with Oracle product developers. By becoming involved in the design and development of new products, WWCS can better prepare to support them. GSPI is also focusing on fine-tuning service delivery operations—such as phone support, electronic support, and on-site support—to provide the most appropriate level of service to all types of customers. And, to ensure Oracle staff members have the

necessary knowledge and skills to service customers as environments and technologies change, GSPI is implementing competency initiatives to prepare Oracle staff members for the future.

"Global Services Planning and Implementation is leading the business planning, change management, and quality improvement activities WWCS must complete to be able to deliver a consistently high level of service to global customers," Mayfield says. "We are doing what it takes to ensure that whether a customer calls Oracle Worldwide Support from Hong Kong, Paris, Dallas, or Melbourne, the customer will have the impression of interacting with a single, responsive, effective support organization." ■

Large Systems Support Tests 10,000-User Configurations

continued from page 1

an enterprise information system. The cost-effective tools and methods utilized in the Odyssey endeavor now give customers the ability to ensure large system supportability to an extent not previously possible. Prior to this accomplishment, such tests were unavailable or were too complex and costly for businesses with expanding systems to test under full demand load.

"Through LSS, a new level of service has been reached that effectively supports our customers' business growth using Oracle products and services," said Randy Baker, Senior Vice President, Oracle Worldwide Customer Support. "This achievement underscores our goal to build support relationships with customers that make us a partner in ensuring their business success."

Extending the Test Limits Reduces Customer Risk

Businesses today are implementing applications which must support thousands of users. The use of specialized tools and methods to test new or modified systems prior to deployment results in improved system safety and lower implementation and support costs.

However, traditional testing strategies begin to break down before reaching the 10,000-user level. The Odyssey project team has successfully resolved the scalability issues of testing large, complex enterprise systems. The Odyssey project's capability of simulating 10,000 users was achievable by combining Oracle's support expertise with performance testing tools and services provided by Performance Awareness, and enterprise servers from Digital Equipment and Sun Microsystems.

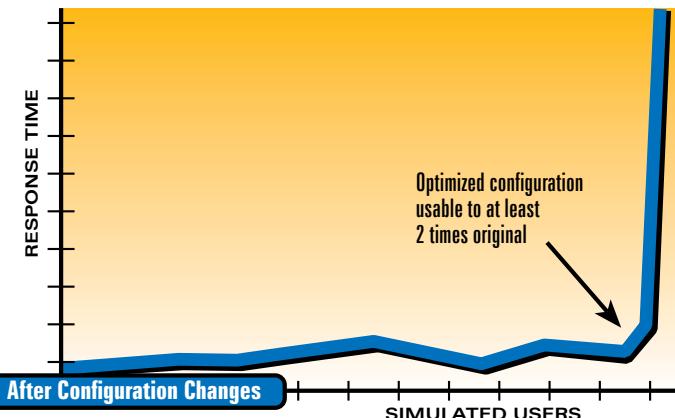
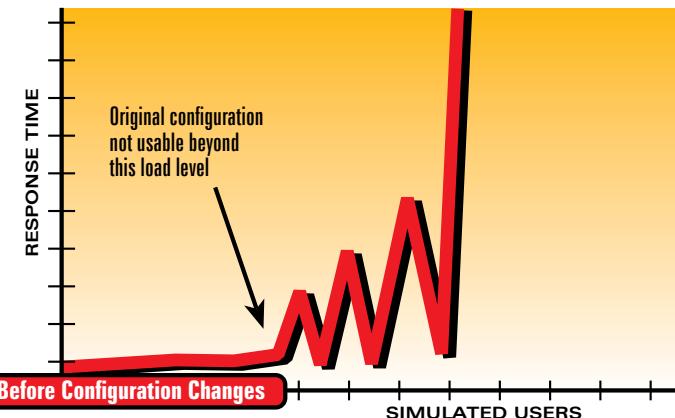
"The ability to simulate 10,000 users in a client/server environment is a significant milestone for the automated performance testing tools market," said Kent Siefkes, vice president of research and development for Performance Awareness. "It demonstrates the benefits of a new generation of client/server performance testing tools, as well as Oracle's commitment to meeting the needs of large enterprises."

The ability to simulate up to 10,000 users creates a new opportunity to assist customers with aggressive expansion plans. "LSS can now ensure that

customers can safely and confidently test performance and capacity plans for systems built on Oracle products using Oracle architectures," stated Gene DeKoster, vice president, Oracle

our enterprise customers."

Prior to the Odyssey project, LSS performed a successful simulation of 4,000 users against a critical internal information system. The test was conducted



Using results from simulated load testing, Oracle's LSS staff can recommend modifications to significantly increase system capacity.

Americas, Worldwide Customer Support. "This is another example of Worldwide Customer Support's commitment to deliver premium support services to

using Performance Awareness products and enterprise-scale equipment from Hewlett-Packard and EMC. This effort enabled management to reliably plan for an expected doubling of

system demand. As the graphic on page 12 shows, adjustments to the Oracle system recommended by the LSS team helped “flatten” user response times to optimal levels with an increasing user load, greatly improving system reliability and scalability.

Proactive Customer Support

The LSS service benefits organizations that have a business need to grow their current system into one that can accommodate thousands of users, or are migrating from a mainframe environment to open systems. LSS works closely with customers and vendors to characterize and

understand areas of risk. The LSS professionals evaluate system models under production-realistic conditions and develop a risk-mitigation plan of implementation guidelines, operations practices, and deliverable services that assures customer requirements for system stability are met.

Oracle customers can now realize their vision of production-realistic stress testing. Today, the methodology is available through the LSS premium services. Development is currently underway for a commercially viable load testing

solution through partnership with the companies that supply the hardware, software testing tools, and system analysis tools.

Located near Oracle's Redwood Shores headquarters, LSS's \$20 million Belmont center has a staff of senior systems and software professionals from Oracle and its Business Alliance Partners. The center is equipped with over 180 CPUs and more than 12 terabytes of high performance on-line storage, in high-end configurations from Data General, Digital Equipment, EMC, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Sequent, Silicon

Graphics, Sun Microsystems, and others.

Oracle Large Systems

Support is the premium service of Oracle Worldwide Support devoted to mitigating the risk in implementing unproven system configurations. The LSS initiative is a partnership between the service divisions at Oracle, enterprise systems platform vendors, and Oracle Business Alliance Partners. The LSS mission is to proactively ensure customers' large enterprise systems are reliable and supportable. ■

Building a 10,000-User Load Test

The primary challenge in conducting a load test of 10,000 connected users is overcoming the logistical problem of managing the large client population. In the traditional load test model, client activity is simulated via key stroke input at the user interface (see figure 1). This works well enough for load tests in the range of hundreds of users, but becomes expensive and difficult to manage when business requirements drive the range to the thousands. In the Large

System Support Odyssey project, this obstacle is overcome by developing a “light client” to drive the server load (see figure 2).

Testing the Real Server

The LSS focus of load testing is to measure the server's performance and characterize its components' behavior under increasing stress. Since the results must be directly applied to production implementations, the server component of the LSS test bed is a replica of the production server with a fully populated production database.

FIGURE 1

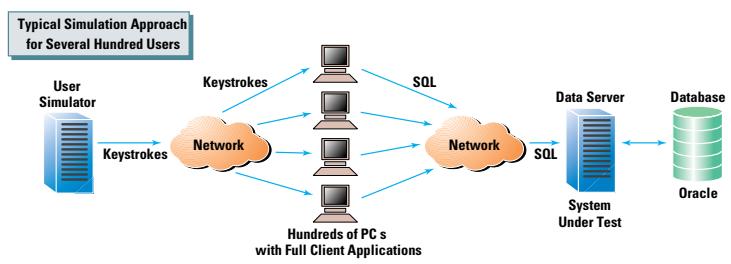
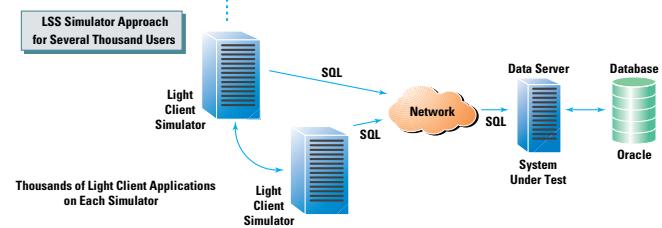


FIGURE 2



The LSS Odyssey project simulates the input from thousands of users by developing a “light client” to drive the server load.

Building a 10,000-User Load Test

continued from page 13

To facilitate the creation of a representative load mix that scales to 10,000 discrete connections, the LSS Odyssey team has developed a client model based exclusively on the client/server communication element. By eliminating unnecessary parts of the client-side logic, a simulated user is created that uses far less system resources to run than the full client. This "light client" is obtainable by recording the network traffic between clients and servers through the use of preVue-C/STM from Performance Awareness. This highly flexible

tool generates transaction scripts from the Oracle SQL*Net traffic captured between the client and server during actual user sessions. The user load can be reproduced on the server without the need for the client application to be present. This way everything looks like a real production system is in place from the perspective of the database server.

Simulating the Real Users

The recorded SQL transactions are placed into a script file to represent a generic user performing a business function. The generic script file is then replicated and each copy works

on different data from the database providing a realistic representation of the production environment. By understanding the business function being supported by the client/server SQL exchange, the LSS professionals edit and sequence the generated scripts to accurately reflect full application transaction execution without the bulk of the client processes actually taking place. An iterative cycle of validation and adjustment yields a client model with a high degree of accuracy to production users. LSS professionals analyze the resulting data to determine the server's current performance

parameters and develop system optimization recommendations. Once the client model is built, it can be altered with relative ease to depict changing business operations. This is extremely useful in analyzing systems that experience changing demand during the fiscal cycle.

The net result of the LSS Odyssey project is the ability to manageably test thousands of users, with a realistic load on the data server, using commercially viable tools and techniques. ■

Enterprise Storage for the LSS Center

To effectively test large systems, the LSS Center needs advanced storage products to store the terabytes of data such systems use. The Oracle business partner supplying the storage systems is EMC Corp., the world's leading supplier of enterprise-wide intelligent information and storage technology.

Oracle and EMC together supply open systems solutions



and support to more than 700 of the world's largest open systems customers. Like Oracle, EMC is focused on customer service. EMC's Symmetrix storage systems have built-in monitors that permit them to be maintained from remote

locations with no disruption in service to the customer. EMC also maintains a worldwide staff of Customer Service Engineers who are available around the clock to go anywhere to solve a customer's problem.

EMC's high-end independent storage systems help Oracle and its customers test mission-critical systems and obtain the "proof-of-concept" assurances that allow customers to implement systems with confidence in their performance and supportability.

For more information about EMC products and services, see EMC's web page at <http://www.emc.com>. ■

Netherlands and Austria Repeat as Global Customer Satisfaction Award Winners

The winners of the second semi-annual Global Customer Satisfaction Award have been announced, and

Oracle Netherlands and Oracle Austria have each won for the second time.

This award was established in 1996 to recognize country organizations that attain the highest customer satisfaction ratings, which are determined by Oracle's semi-annual Country Support Customer Satisfaction Survey. Countries are separated into three tiers based on the size of Oracle business in the country.

The winning Oracle support center receives a trophy it displays for six months, when the results of the next survey are announced.

support offerings and procedures, stay in close touch with them, and pay careful attention to managing key technical issues like renewals and update

added some local value-added services, such as startup packages with new customers, a local technical bulletin, and free technical seminars."

THE WINNERS ARE:



Tier 1 countries
Oracle Netherlands
Repeat Winner



Tier 2 countries
Oracle Mexico
NEW Winner



Tier 3 countries
Oracle Austria
Repeat Winner

Javier Oropeza, Technical Support Senior Manager, Oracle Mexico, attributes his organization's achievement to several factors. "We train customers on

shipments," he says. "We have also increased our field support, because it's a proactive service that helps customers avoid potential problems, and have

"Each of these countries has done an outstanding job in attaining very high levels of customer satisfaction with support," says Randy Baker, Senior Vice President, Oracle WWCS. "They understand the importance of support to the overall customer relationship, and do whatever it takes to help customers succeed." ■

Oracle Software and Year 2000 Compatibility

The Oracle tools suite has long supported methods of storing date information in a year-2000-compatible format, however, not all software programs, even those written by Oracle, have used those features.

To make our user community aware of the potential hazards of software incompatibility with the year 2000, Oracle has developed a white paper, Oracle Products and Year 2000 Compliance. The white paper includes year 2000 compliance criteria and a statement for each current product or product set regarding the level of year 2000 date change compliance.

Year 2000 compliance information is also provided for mature products that are still used by a significant

number of organizations, as well as advice on how to implement minimal code changes or workarounds for mature products.

As the level of compliance increases for the few products that are not yet fully compliant, the white paper will be updated. Customers may obtain the white paper and future updates from the following sources.

The paper will be published on the Oracle Worldwide Support web site by April 1. The Web site address is: <http://www.oracle.com/support>. Additionally, in the U.S., it will be available after April 1 by calling Oracle Worldwide Support at (415) 506-1500. When you call, press 1 to have a copy faxed to a location in the U.S.; press 4 to request a copy from U.S. Client Relations. ■

Oracle8 Server

TRANSACTION PROCESSING FOR TODAY'S BUSINESSES

As IT professionals prepare for the challenges of twenty-first-century enterprise computing, Oracle is delivering the server to handle them. Oracle8, the latest version of Oracle's powerful database, will be unveiled mid-year 1997. Massive scalability, high availability, and breakthrough object relational technology are among the hallmarks of this new version.

Like its predecessor Oracle7, Oracle8 provides complete support for all transaction types: Transaction Processing, Data Warehousing, Electronic Commerce, and Collaboration. This article will focus specifically on Transaction Processing (TP) capabilities in Oracle8.

Today's TP environment is a complex mix of mainframe, client/server and Web technology. Customers increasingly need to integrate these different environments into their enterprise architectures. Oracle's Network Computing Architecture and Oracle8 bridge the gap between these environments. Network Computing Architecture is an open framework that allows the different worlds of client/server and the Web to share a common computing model. And since the Web brings new challenges to the TP arena, such as larger user populations, new data types, and a multi-tier environment, Oracle8 provides the scalability, high availability, extensibility, and network

integration needed to run enterprise TP applications.

Enterprise Power

Oracle8 raises the ceiling for database servers by supporting larger and more demanding TP applications. With Oracle8, businesses can support databases that scale up to hundreds of terabytes with tens of thousands of concurrent users, while at the same time making system management easier and enhancing security over the network.

Scalability—Oracle8 provides two techniques for supporting tens of thousands of users easily. The Connection Manager concentrates multiple clients into a single multiplexed database connection, even if the clients are using

different protocols. Connection Pooling reassigns physical connections from idle users, placing the idle users in a quiescent mode until they become active again.

Availability—With Oracle8, 7x24x52 operations are a reality. One of the new features that makes this possible is *data partitioning*, which provides the ability to use and manage data on a partitioned basis. Oracle8 also offers transparent application failover for high availability.

Management—Partitioning also reduces the burden of managing large amounts of data. Performing database functions such as importing, exporting, loading, and truncation can be

done by partition instead of by the entire database.

Oracle Enterprise Manager makes managing partitions even easier by providing a centralized console to manage database systems, applications, and partitions. Oracle8 Server-Managed Backup and Recovery automates these tasks, making them nearly effortless.

Security—Net8, Oracle's industry-leading network offering, extends the security services offered in the server by using Oracle Security Services, a new component included in Oracle8. These services provide enhanced user authentication and user administration.

Network Ready

The introduction of the Web into corporate computing infrastructures has placed new requirements on transaction systems. Powerful replication, interaction with other data sources, and queuing technology are increasingly required.

Replication—One of the major advances in Oracle8 is in

the area of distributed computing. Oracle extends its industry lead in distributed computing with significant replication advances in Oracle8.

Heterogeneous Services

Heterogeneous services are fully integrated into Oracle8 and expand upon existing gateway functionality.

Advanced Queuing—Oracle8 provides server-based queuing, a key distributed computing advantage which eliminates bottlenecks associated with network downtime and application failures.

Evolutionary

Future database trends lead to a shift from a monolithic model to a component- and service-centric model that focuses on application servers and distributed objects.

Oracle8 provides all the advantages of the component model while maintaining and greatly enhancing the power gained from a database-centric model.

Oracle7 applications will run unchanged against Oracle8, and

Oracle provides a simple and fast upgrade utility.

Transaction Processing for the Future

While it can support today's most demanding TP applications, Oracle8 also brings the ability to run the new era of TP applications that will be enabled through open network

computing architectures. Whether it's online banking, catalog shopping or travel reservations over the Web, Oracle8 will support tomorrow's transactions on any major client, software, or hardware platform. ■

Note: This is a brief introduction to Oracle8 transaction processing. For more information on features and benefits, see the Web version of SupportNews.

Oracle8 features massive scalability, high availability, and breakthrough object relational technology.

SUPPORT SURVEYS SHOW INCREASED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Monthly surveys conducted by Oracle WWCS show a significant improvement in customer satisfaction among U.S.-based customers from September to December 1996. The surveys are transaction-based, and are randomly selected daily from closed Technical Assistance Requests, or TARs.

The three key support performance indicators showed the most dramatic improvement during the period. The rating for Overall Support improved 24 percent; for Time to Reach, 25 percent; and for Time to Resolve, 22 percent.

Oracle WWCS believes that the increasing experience of our support analysts is a key reason for the improvement.

Many analysts joined Oracle in the spring, were trained over the summer, and have now become highly efficient and knowledgeable. As a result, they resolve customer problems more quickly, which enables them to help more customers each day.

Ratings for key support issues in other geographies also improved. The surveys show a 16 percent improvement in overall support satisfaction among customers calling the U.K. Global Support Center and improvements in satisfaction with overall support, technology expertise, and resolution time among callers to the Australia Global Support Center. ■



NT TRAINING UNDERWAY ON FIVE CONTINENTS

To ensure Oracle customers receive world-class support for Oracle solutions running on the Windows NT version 4.0 platform, Oracle is rolling out an enhanced training program for support analysts worldwide over the next 16 months.

The ultimate goal of the program is the Microsoft certification of Oracle's support engineers and product specialists. To become certified as Microsoft NT Product Specialists or Systems

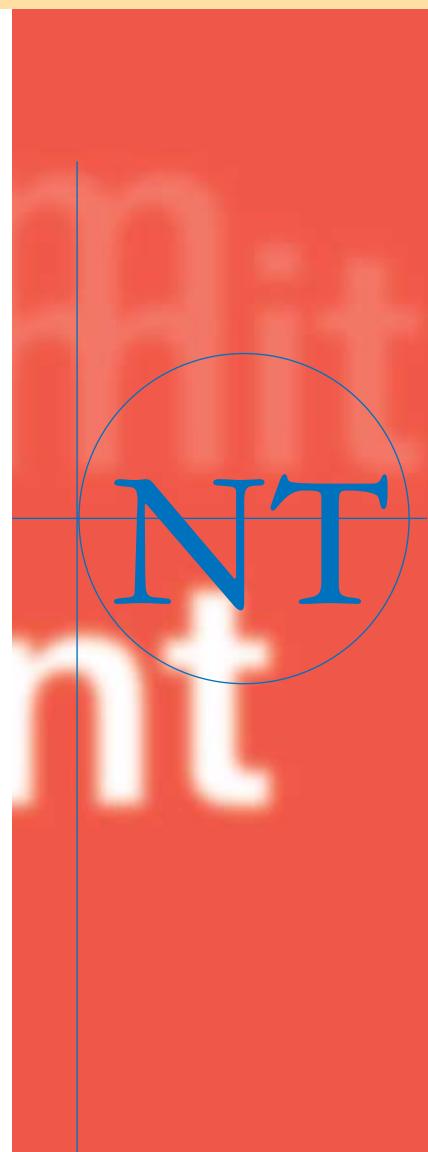
Engineers, Oracle staff members will need to complete a total of six courses dedicated to supporting Windows NT version 4.0 technologies and Windows NT server version 4.0 enterprise technologies.

Learning centers also will be established at Oracle offices that participate in the program to allow for ongoing, self-paced training.

Oracle's commitment to earlier versions of NT has paid off in market momentum,

according to an International Data Corporation (IDC) study that showed the market share of Oracle7 on NT increasing from 2.6 percent in 1994 to 24.8 percent in 1995.

Current Oracle products on the NT platform include the Oracle7 database, WebServer, InterOffice, application development tools, collaboration products, packaged applications, Online Analytical Processing (OLAP) products and middleware. ■



WWCS ANNOUNCES MANAGEMENT CHANGES

New Vice President, Global Services Planning and Implementation

Michael Mayfield has joined Oracle WWCS as Vice President, Global Services Planning and Implementation. In his new position, Mike will help WWCS define, develop and implement a global service value chain infrastructure, collaborate with Oracle product divisions on the design and implementation of reliability, availability, and serviceability (RAS) product attributes, assist Service Delivery Operations in preparing to support Oracle products, and support the Oracle workforce by developing and delivering WWCS

competency initiatives. He will also assist Randy Baker and the WWCS Global Support Council by leading business planning, change management, and global quality improvement efforts.

Mike has 22 years of broad-based experience in the computer services industry, the past 16 with Digital Equipment Corporation. Most recently, he was the Service Delivery Reengineering Director for Digital's Multivendor Customer Services. Mike will report directly to Randy Baker, Senior Vice President, Oracle WWCS.

New Director of Support Field Marketing for Asia Pacific

Jojo Añonuevo has been promoted to Director of Support Field Marketing for Asia Pacific. In his new role, Jojo will help leverage best practices from several markets to deliver a service offering to Asia Pacific customers that they perceive as being designed expressly for their organization.

Jojo has been with Oracle for more than 12 years, five of which were spent at Oracle headquarters. He has acquired an in-depth

understanding of the unique needs of Asia Pacific customers by working in the region for more than seven years, most recently as Customer Services Director of Oracle Philippines. He has also held several technical positions with Oracle in applications programming, consulting, and technical support.

New Director of Support Field Marketing for EMEA

Thierry Collet has been promoted to Director of Support Field Marketing for EMEA. In his new role, Thierry will help design and deliver an expanding range of service offerings that maximize the benefit EMEA customers receive from their Oracle software.

Thierry has been with Oracle for more than nine years. Most recently, he was Support Sales Director for Oracle France. At Oracle, he has also been DMD Manager, Global Account Manager for the Groupe Bull account, and OEM Manager, where he defined and launched the OEM policy for Oracle France.

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