

Delivering True Full-Time Transaction Visibility With OpTier CoreFirst 3.0

Abstract

This ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) Impact Brief covers the September 8, 2008 general availability announcement by OpTier of its CoreFirst 3.0 product, designed to deliver real-time, end-to-end visibility into complex transactions across all tiers of enterprise IT environments. Also included in this analysis is OpTier's simultaneous announcement, in a separate press release, of CoreFirst's support of the Microsoft Application Framework (.NET). This paper covers the announcements in the context of the overall market and business challenges, and concludes with an EMA perspective with commentary on OpTier's overall strategic direction.

Raising the Bar: OpTier Launches CoreFirst 3.0

On September 8, 2008, OpTier announced general availability of its flagship CoreFirst 3.0 product. Among its list of new features is support for the Microsoft Application Framework (.NET) and IIS transactions.

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OpTier continues to surprise analysts by significantly over-achieving sales revenues, with mid-year 2008 revenues exceeding expectations by 230%. With a primary focus on providing next-generation business transaction management (BTM) capabilities to Fortune 200 customers in finance, retail and insurance, OpTier is succeeding in selling significant new deals into a tight IT budget cycle. Much of this business comes from strong follow-on sales as a result of outstanding customer satisfaction, and OpTier is clearly a company on the rise.

OpTier sets the bar high with CoreFirst, which has the impressive goal of providing "end-to-end visibility of all transactions, across all execution tiers, all of the time." To support this, the company continues to add relevant features, expanding an already impressive list of supported platforms with each release. Targeted at the enterprise, CoreFirst 3.0 provides exceptional scalability and is capable of managing more than 70,000 transactions per minute (which works out to an impressive 100M transactions a day). CoreFirst has visibility from the Web to the mainframe.

The BTM Market: Growing More Complex Every Day

In two recent EMA surveys, one covering the financial, accounting and insurance sectors and the other measuring healthcare, medical and pharmaceuticals, 43% of all respondents stated that aligning IT with the business was the #1 goal for 2008. EMA research has shown that many companies are struggling to meet this objective. The reasons are largely historical, with IT focused first on managing physical devices in the infrastructure and then on monitoring IT transactions. However, the vital link between transactions which are interesting to IT and those that are interesting to the business, such as the multi-component services that run custom banking applications, is often overlooked. OpTier has designed CoreFirst from the ground up to focus precisely on complex business transac-

tions, correlating them back into IT metrics and events. This link provides the fundamental elements for the much-desired IT/business alignment.

EMA research has also shown that complexity of managing enterprise infrastructures is escalating at a dizzying pace, roughly following Moore's Law. This complexity is being driven, ironically, by new computing initiatives which are meant to provide more rapid deployment of business services. SOA is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Often

a boon for developers and the business alike, it is proving to be a nightmare for IT administrators. In addition, business drivers such as data center consolidation, mergers and acquisitions, and general business growth are fueling increasingly heterogeneous, complex IT environments.

EMA consulting has found that companies are addressing this challenge in two ways: with slow adoption of an approach to IT management, which requires significant manual mapping of services to the infrastructure, and with more rapid adoption of technology managed by automated discovery and modeling tools. Over time, the former approach will find itself at a significant competitive disadvantage, according to EMA projections. CoreFirst 3.0 provides automatic, continuous discovery of links between business services and IT components without manual mapping or modeling. It also identifies and reacts to changes in the infrastructure in real time.

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Finally, many companies are re-addressing Service Level Management (SLM), and re-vamping Service Level Agreements (SLAs) established during the late 1990s to take advantage of today's improved metrics for the end-user customer experience. With this reassessment comes the challenge of ensuring that SLAs are met proactively, with warnings and remediation, before service level goals are breached.

Key Ramifications

The following are the key ramifications of the OpTier CoreFirst 3.0 release:

- *Microsoft support:* CoreFirst 3.0 now provides support for Microsoft .NET, Internet Information Server (IIS) 6.0, ASP, ASP.NET, ADO.NET and Web Services. Support for these additional platforms provides critical business transaction monitoring for IIS-based applications, a fundamental component of many enterprise initiatives. Additional Microsoft support is expected in coming months.
- *Additional technologies:* In addition to the Microsoft announcement, CoreFirst 3.0 now supports JBoss, Tomcat, Resin, GridServer, UDB, Sybase, WebSeal and BEA AquaLogic for SOA.
- *SLA monitoring:* Enhanced SLA monitoring locates execution errors, as opposed to transactions that totally fail. This allows rapid pinpointing of a suspect component based on the error generated, rather than requiring administrators to wade through multiple log files to determine root cause. This reduces support costs and can contribute to improved SLA compliance.
- *Support for long running transactions with multiple units of work:* CoreFirst 3.0 also supports monitoring of transactions within transactions and units of work within transactions

with appropriate alerts and status messages. This feature is invaluable for identifying long-running and “hung” transactions, providing a continuous view into in-flight execution.

- *New reports:* New visibility reporting is available for change management (i.e., the effect of a change on transaction SLAs), service management (i.e., top business transaction SLA status), and service optimization (i.e., worst performing transactions and most chatty transactions). With a focus on providing a critical link between IT and the business user, CoreFirst reporting features correlation information needed to “bridge the gap” and provide meaningful, pragmatic information to all – corporate clients, the business and IT.

EMA Perspective

EMA has closely followed the evolution of IT monitoring over the past decade both from a vendor and an enterprise perspective. During that time, fundamental technology advancements in this space seem to occur every few years. Monitoring has evolved from a focus on devices (all of which can be available while a transaction still fails) to a focus on applications (which, likewise, can be misleading in the context of multi-component services). EMA believes that the effectiveness of monitoring solutions that lack business transaction management capabilities is limited, and OpTier provides the latest fundamental advancements in IT monitoring.

The value of correlating BTM metrics with other established monitoring data lies in more rapid isolation and root cause analysis, reduced outages from change, increased time between failures, and a proactive approach to SLM. EMA believes this can help CoreFirst 3.0 to deliver on its promises of an improved end-user experience, along with elimination of transaction bottlenecks, improved operational efficiency, and reduced overall IT costs.

OpTier, as a company, has shown outstanding capabilities in penetrating the most demanding and complex environments within the financial, retail and insurance IT sectors. With 60% of revenue coming from repeat business within these organizations, OpTier has demonstrated that CoreFirst clearly addresses the needs of those businesses. As one of the few solutions in the BTM market clearly focused on bridging the gap between IT and the business, OpTier has a significant advantage over its legacy competitors that offer less-focused alternatives. Such solutions are often packaged as five, six or even seven separate “products” to address similar issues.

EMA strongly believes that IT goals for 2009 will reflect a number of the core strengths of the OpTier vision: aligning IT with the business, improving business service quality, reducing IT costs, and managing escalating IT complexity. EMA is especially impressed with CoreFirst’s approach to automation, as solutions requiring manual transaction modeling have fared poorly in implementation efforts to date. According to EMA consulting, the ability to prioritize transactions based on business needs is critical to focus IT troubleshooting efforts on failures with the biggest business impact. In EMA interviews with OpTier customers, it is clear that CoreFirst 3.0 capabilities help them achieve this

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goal, and to focus on real-world business needs at the forefront of the competitive marketplace.

EMA analysts predict the next two years will see a continued interest on BTM as a much-needed supplement to established monitoring practices. As SLM regains the attention that it had back in the late 1990s, EMA also expects significant re-evaluation of SLAs to occur in enterprises in all markets. This bodes well for CoreFirst 3.0, which provides much of the intelligence needed for these efforts.

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