

OpTier Experience Manager: “Closing the Loop” on Transaction Management Across the Data Center-End User Experience Gap

Abstract

On September 29, 2009, OpTier® launched OpTier Experience Manager, an innovative approach to End User Experience Management (EUEM). It supplements OpTier’s successful CoreFirst® Business Transaction Management™ (BTM) solution with agentless end user experience monitoring, yielding a comprehensive view of each transaction as it traverses both the data center and the end-user “last mile.”

A variety of competitors offer end user experience or transaction monitoring/management solutions. Relatively few, however, combine the two. The OpTier BTM Suite fully integrates two core products to yield a distinctive solution specifically optimized for high-throughput, “can’t fail,” and advanced analytics transactions.

OpTier’s differentiators include depth of integration, ease of deployment and maintenance, and a lightweight footprint. OpTier initially made a name for itself in the financial services marketplace and currently serves customers across a variety of vertical markets. CoreFirst, OpTier’s flagship solution, automatically detects, tracks, maps, and prioritizes multi-tier transactions as they execute across the data center. OpTier Experience Manager “closes the loop” by adding visibility to transaction availability, response time, and end user behavior. Currently in Beta, OpTier Experience Manager will be Generally Available (GA) at the end of October 2009.

The OpTier BTM Suite fully integrates two core products to yield a distinctive solution specifically optimized for high-throughput, “can't fail,” and advanced analytics transactions.

The Announcement

OpTier is a privately owned company headquartered in New York, NY, with EMEA headquarters in London and Research and Development facilities in Israel. OpTier’s sweet spot has centered on Business Transaction Management from its inception, with its CoreFirst solution positioning the company as a consistent over-achiever in terms of year over year revenue growth. OpTier won Morgan Stanley’s “CTO Summit Innovation Award” for Most Innovative Financial Services solution in June 2009.

CoreFirst’s strength lies in its ability to discover and monitor transactions, data center dependencies, and platform changes automatically and in real time. CoreFirst automates the process of transaction mapping by “watching” the transaction as it traverses underlying tiers. Most competing solutions require extensive manual modeling and configuration to achieve a similar level of visibility.

OpTier Experience Manager is a new addition to the line which extends OpTier’s reach to the end user. It was developed in response to the changing nature of the transaction, as well as to multiple customer requests. The product is agentless and utilizes metrics and data from multiple sources, including a network tap or span port, as well as log files, Web pages, the client workstation, and third-party products. OpTier CoreFirst and Experience Manager can be purchased separately, but are also seamlessly integrated and delivered in the OpTier BTM Suite.

OpTier Experience Manager is a new addition to the line which extends OpTier's reach to the end user.

OpTier Experience Manager: “Closing the Loop” on Transaction Management Across the Data Center-End User Experience Gap

In addition to the features delivered separately by CoreFirst and Experience Manager, OpTier BTM Suite connects the user’s experience of a transaction to the underlying infrastructure “fabric” supporting it. It is designed to simplify troubleshooting and root cause analysis across today’s extremely complex tiered and composite transactions, and features multiple alert types, including identification of failed/slow transactions and failure percentages by user, group, or location. Its automated, comprehensive intelligence-gathering and modeling processes also support problem identification and isolation by variables such as geography, browser type, content type, and/or device type. In addition, OpTier supports Service Level Management (SLM) and impact assessment as part of its overall value proposition.

Industry Context

In the past two to three years, transactions have evolved to rely increasingly on architectures and technologies with the potential to have significant adverse impact on the user experience. Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), Asynchronous JavaScript and XML (AJAX), and Microsoft® Silverlight™ are examples of the new wave of composite and Web 2.0 technologies that impact network bandwidth and execution overhead. ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) research is finding that both SOA and Web 2.0 are widely deployed and widely consumed in the enterprise, making the role of IT support that much harder.

Web 2.0 has enlivened the Internet with Web pages that are much more interactive than the static, HTML-based web-pages of the past. SOA has helped fulfill the industry’s vision of code module reuse and business agility through IT. At the same time, these innovations have increased the likelihood of failed and/or slow transactions. They are massively network-dependent, distributed, and bandwidth-intensive. Without specialized toolsets, tribal knowledge and trial and error are the typical methods for root cause analysis, since IT specialists have little or no visibility to the “complete” transaction. At the same time, many of these transactions are business critical, and degradation or outright failure can have a dollar impact in the millions of dollars per hour.

Availability and performance can be adversely impacted by multiple factors at virtually any point from the application software to the supporting technology fabric. On the data center side, repeated requests for data can cripple network pipes and database servers, slowing down execution of the entire transaction. Large downloads of graphics, video, audio, or other massive content can put excessive loads on networks, while outside forces such as VoIP prioritization and network configuration can slow response time. On the client side, memory and/or CPU limitations can impact execution times, as can flaws in software design and even user error.

The beauty of OpTier’s BTM Suite is that it is capable of detecting and exposing failure points and execution anomalies, often before the user notices a problem. In doing so, it narrows a host of potential problem sources to a specific problem with a specific cause. In addition, it is useful for proactive management, including capacity planning, end-to-end visibility, and activity-based costing for shared environments.

EMA research is finding that both SOA and Web 2.0 are widely deployed and widely consumed in the enterprise, making the role of IT support that much harder.

OpTier Experience Manager: “Closing the Loop” on Transaction Management Across the Data Center-End User Experience Gap

Key Ramifications

With this announcement, OpTier is addressing some key market trends identified by EMA research:

- *Expectation of fast time to value:* In response to both exponential growth in IT complexity and today’s dismal economic climate, companies are seeking products that can be deployed quickly, yield fast ROI, and don’t require lengthy, expensive consulting engagements to deliver value.

One of OpTier’s core strengths lies in the fact that transaction detection and tracking are automated. The OpTier BTM Suite capitalizes on CoreFirst’s simple deployment and ease of use, as well as OpTier Experience Manager’s agentless technology. Competing solutions often require weeks or even months of consulting time for deployment. In contrast, OpTier’s focus has always been on ease of deployment and replacement of manual modeling and configuration with high levels of automation.

- *Expectation of lightweight footprint and minimal ongoing maintenance:* Changes to today’s complex applications take a heavy toll in terms of transaction support. Between 25% and 75% of production problems are caused by changes to code or infrastructure, with the percentage depending on the rigor of a company’s change control process. Often, the impact of a change is felt by the end user before key IT personnel are even aware that a change took place.

For these reasons, one requirement of leading-edge transaction management toolsets is that they are capable of detecting and self-adapting to change. This is an area in which OpTier shines. OpTier’s solutions shift the onus of responsibility from human personnel to sophisticated algorithms capable of detecting change and updating models automatically. Again, this is a key differentiator, and likely one more reason for OpTier’s ongoing success in the marketplace. In addition, OpTier BTM has very low overhead, typically less than 1-2% of CPU, which is one reason why it is often used in high-throughput, low-latency environments

- *Rapid growth of the end user experience monitoring marketplace:* Quality of Experience and End User Experience monitoring have become hot topics in recent years as transactions have become increasingly complex and mission-critical. In fact, with the growth of SOA and other composite services, interest in End User Experience management is at an all-time high.

However, potential customers have found that such products have limited value as stand-alone solutions. With visibility to the transaction at the endpoint, but lacking visibility to supporting infrastructure, troubleshooting and root cause analysis rely heavily on guesswork. OpTier has combined the two approaches and in doing so created a more complete view of both the transaction and the user experience.

OpTier Experience Manager: “Closing the Loop” on Transaction Management Across the Data Center-End User Experience Gap

EMA Perspective

In a sea of “Swiss Army Knives” claiming to do everything but the IT administrator’s dinner dishes, OpTier has stayed with its core focus on “end-to-end visibility to all transactions, across all execution tiers, all of the time.” OpTier has continued to improve on CoreFirst over time, and in doing so has continued to rack up impressive revenue growth even through the current economic downturn.

This is one reason why, when OpTier releases an entirely new product, the industry should sit up and take notice. OpTier Experience Manager was developed organically, by the same team that developed CoreFirst. It was developed over the same architecture as CoreFirst, one reason why OpTier is able to announce a totally new solution, with full integration with CoreFirst from day one.

That being said, the OpTier BTM Suite has some stiff competition. CA Wily has built increasingly robust integration between its Introscope and Customer Experience Manager (CEM) lines, and recently announced mainframe integration via Sysview. Earlier in 2009, Compuware announced EUE Analysis with both Real User Monitoring and Active Monitoring in Vantage 11. IBM Tivoli and Quest, with its Foglight solution, also continue to innovate, as businesses become increasingly aware of the importance of managing their application, transaction, and business service assets more effectively.

However, if the past is any predictor of the future, it will be no surprise to see OpTier make inroads on the competition with its new solutions as it has done in the past. Companies seeking fast time to value, a targeted solution for specific transaction-related problems, and/or agility in adapting to changing business conditions will likely have an interest in this product line. EMA recommends that such companies take a look at OpTier and its end-to-end solutions, with the price of OpTier Experience Manager starting at \$40,000.

In a sea of “Swiss Army Knives” claiming to do everything but the IT administrator's dinner dishes, OpTier has stayed with its core focus on “end-to-end visibility to all transactions, across all execution tiers, all of the time.”

About EMA

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that specializes in going “beyond the surface” to provide deep insight across the full spectrum of IT management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise IT professionals and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or follow EMA on Twitter (http://twitter.com/ema_research).

1968.110609