

The Manageability Manifesto

Every business running business critical database driven applications faces manageability challenges with their database and application infrastructure.

This manifesto argues that Oracle Corporation, for whatever reason, has with Oracle Database 10g failed to address the manageability challenge for a crucial market segment. In fact for these customers Oracle 10g will likely be harder to effectively manage and maintain than Oracle Database 9i was due to the removal of manageability features from some editions of the product.

This manifesto further argues that a small and transparent change to the licensing policy in operation by Oracle Corporation can easily enable the true manageability innovations in Oracle Database 10g to be available to those who need them. This change is simply to make all Oracle 10g Enterprise Manager Packs available to all customers at the same cost.

Finally this manifesto argues that such a change is in the best interests of Oracle Corporation themselves since it appears to require no coding or product development and

Product Background

Oracle has for some years addressed manageability challenges with an evolving product Oracle Enterprise Manager which shipped as part of the database license, and some extra cost feature packs. In Oracle 9i the base product consisted of a central repository, management agents on each managed node and a java based management console.

The management console was also available over the web as a java application using an Oracle specific plugin for web browsers. Administrators or operators would use the console to manage targets, to schedule operations and to be alerted to various conditions.

The agents provided a notification and alerting infrastructure and were capable of running various tasks on the managed targets.

The central repository provided a mechanism for storing administration rules and managing administrators, targets and so on.

In addition to the basic functionality listed above customers of Oracle Corporation could purchase a number of management packs that extended the functionality of Enterprise Manager. Customers of the Enterprise edition of the product, that is customers who ran Oracle on machines with more than 4 processors or 4Gb of RAM or who needed enhanced functionality for example in the area of data warehousing, could purchase a number of packs in the areas of configuration management, tuning and diagnostics and so on. Customers of the Standard Edition of the product could purchase the Standard management pack which covered a subset of the above tasks. Such customers could also choose to implement their own monitoring and manageability tests and alerts using the supplied infrastructure.

Oracle Database 10g

One of the core product aims of Oracle Database 10g has been to decrease the workload and cost of management of the Oracle database. This has been in direct response to market criticism of the complexity and high skill levels required to manage the product effectively. Sometimes it seems that every second new feature in this release is named Automatic <something> Management.

Nearly all of these new features are primarily designed to be administered, as one might expect, through the Oracle Database 10g Enterprise Manager. In many cases these new features replace or extend features of the old Enterprise Edition management packs. For this reason most of the true innovations in manageability now form part of one of the extra cost management packs. So the diagnostics pack for example now contains

- Performance Monitoring (Database and Host)
- ADDM (Automated Database Diagnostic Monitor)
- Automatic Workload Repository
- Event Notifications: Notification Methods, Rules and Schedules
- Event history/metric history (Database and Host)
- Blackouts

Oracle Database 10g hasn't however replaced the old Standard management pack available in previous releases. Nor does it make the event and alert system available for Standard Edition users as it was in Oracle 9i and earlier. In fact, just to rub salt into the wound, the alerts do appear on a standard edition home page, but should you attempt to use them you receive the following error

The page requested is part of the Database Diagnostics Pack or the Application Server Diagnostics Pack.

You are not yet licensed to use the Database Diagnostics Pack or the Application Server Diagnostics Pack. If you like this functionality, please see your super administrator about obtaining a license.

Thus Oracle Database 10g has failed in one of its core aims for a significant segment of Oracle Corporations database customers, and in fact is harder to manage for them than its predecessor.

Impact and Proposal

The Standard edition of the Oracle Database is firmly aimed at the SME Market – though the actual edition that is appropriate probably varies much more by application requirements than size of customer. Such customers are less likely to have experienced DBA staff that can perform the same management tasks manually; in many cases they will not have any dedicated Oracle DBA to perform systems management.

In this market, competing products, most notably Microsoft's SQL Server product come with significant management functionality included in the license for the database. In this market in this area Oracle has taken a step backwards.

This can be alleviated, quickly and simply and without any development time by a simple change to Oracle's licensing arrangements for the Management packs for Enterprise Manager. The full functionality of the packs already ships with all editions of the Database; I propose that Oracle simply make each of the packs licensable to all customers – whatever edition they are running – at the same additional cost.

This proposal has the following advantages.

- It makes the enhanced manageability of Oracle 10g available to all customers including those who arguably most need it.
- It requires no change to the shipping product
- It is transparent.
- It delivers choice to the customer base.
- It has little or no impact on existing revenue streams for Oracle.