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Automating Oracle E-Business Suite Processes

Recurring delays and errors mean unhappy users.

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Executive Summary

You've made a major investment in Oracle E-Business Suite applications to run your critical enterprise processes. But these processes stretch beyond Oracle E-Business Suite and rely on a mix of custom and packaged applications.

Management of your critical enterprise processes has become a pressing challenge. Too many staff are tied up in managing the process, as well as finding and diagnosing process errors. SLAs are frequently missed, and customers perceive poor quality of service due to the recurring errors and delays, which are now impacting your critical processes, such as financial period end close, invoicing, payroll and materials requirements planning (MRP) processing. You've decided it's time to consider automation.

You should consider an end-to-end solution in order to regain control, dramatically shorten processing times, reduce costs and make all those last-minute scrambles to meet deadlines a thing of the past.

Benefit From the Experience of Leading Enterprises

So what are the key capabilities you actually need to address an end-to-end automation solution?

We've collated the top requirements from global enterprises during the past 15 years, all of which have successfully automated their enterprise processes running across Oracle E-Business Suite and other applications. As such, they were able to reduce processing time by 70 percent and eliminate 90 percent of business process errors while reducing manual effort by 90 percent. Now you can do this too. Here's how.

Automating Oracle E-Business Suite processes end-to-end can eliminate 90% of business process errors

SECTION 1

Visibility and Control of Enterprise Processes End-to-End

Enterprise processes span multiple people, departments and applications that go beyond Oracle systems. Your processes run on a mix of Oracle E-Business Suite and custom as well as packaged applications. These applications usually reside on multiple servers in a complex and heterogeneous IT landscape.

Visibility is typically limited to application silos, which means you don't have control over the entire enterprise process. This results in delays and errors that reveal themselves unexpectedly—and all too often when it's too late.

A solution is needed that provides complete visibility across the entire enterprise process. This allows both IT and the business to better manage and monitor the enterprise process from one single control point to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved as expected, on time, every time.

For example, service levels can be set with real-time monitoring of enterprise processes and predictive capabilities, identifying potential SLA violations as and even before they occur. Also, it is not only necessary to have the ability to identify when service levels are at risk, but it is just as critical to act, notifying recipients and key stakeholders in a timely manner.

Automating Oracle E-Business Suite processes end-to-end ensures you have 100% control over enterprise processes

SECTION 2

Coordinating Between Oracle E-Business Suite and Other Enterprise Applications

Every chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and this is also true for enterprise processes. In this case, the links are the manual handoffs and functional automation tools that provide the coordination between Oracle E-Business Suite and other enterprise applications.

Surprisingly, there is still a high degree of manual coordination between people and departments, which means steps in the process are often performed late, get missed or are executed at the wrong time. This in turn results in delays, errors and inaccuracies.

In addition, the various Oracle E-Business Suite applications and other enterprise applications that support enterprise processes each have their own schedulers that manage workloads within that specific system. These schedulers are often unable to coordinate with other schedulers. For example, Concurrent Manager can only manage Oracle E-Business Suite concurrent requests; it is not aware of other systems and their dependencies.

Most functional automation tools like Concurrent Manager use time-based scheduling, which is not only inefficient—as you have to estimate how long each step will take and leave buffers as a contingency for when problems occur—but also creates unpredictable results in cases when the buffer isn't long enough. For example, if an Informatica extract is initiated before Oracle E-Business Suite finishes processing all the orders, incorrect or incomplete data is extracted into Hyperion, which can result in business decisions being made based on inaccurate data. We call these disjointed systems “islands of automation.”

An automation solution is required to enhance the flow and the quality of data across multiple enterprise platforms, providing consistent and reliable straight-through processing. The islands of automation now become coordinated, so that each system is dynamically aware of its process dependencies. This ensures that steps with dependencies on other processes aren't initiated until the prerequisite one is complete.

Last, to make such an implementation practical, it is important that the automation solution supports a rich set of platforms and enterprise application scenarios without requiring custom scripts or code.

Automating Oracle E-Business Suite and other enterprise application processes eliminates 100% of coordination failures

SECTION 3

Enhancing the Facilities of Concurrent Manager

The internal scheduler of Oracle E-Business Suite is the Concurrent Manager. It provides a framework to schedule execution of individual jobs or groups of jobs within request sets. This allows for regular activity to be scheduled, but it does not allow us to support the business in today's digital world.

Execution needs to occur whenever the business requires it. That means it needs to be based on events—these can come from systems, databases or externally. These processes also need to be defined once and executed for any of the units defined within E-Business Suite, which eliminates the need to maintain multiple request sets and guarantees standardized processing across the company.

When we move to event-based processing, it is also critical to have active service level management watching the delivery on our behalf. This means that when the event is not happening as the business expects, relevant staff can be notified automatically, allowing us to move to proactive delivery of services and not waste time constantly monitoring for success.

SECTION 4

Catching Business Process Errors and Notifying Responsible Parties

Accuracy in enterprise processes is essential, whether in financial processes such as invoicing and financial period end close, HR processes like payroll, or MRP processes. Incorrect data can have significant business impacts on productivity, customer satisfaction and reputation.

While an Oracle E-Business Suite concurrent request may complete successfully in a technical sense, it may still fail on a business level—for example, if the system rejects a general ledger posting, an invoice is rejected or a transfer fails. To compensate, organizations dedicate up to 20 individuals to check the success of the process at a business level. As with all manual processes, errors will slip through, and the more steps involved in the close process, the higher the likelihood of errors.

Error-checking needs to be extended to include the business level for both Oracle E-Business Suite and other enterprise applications. Having extensive automated error-checking capabilities will serve to "error-proof" your enterprise processes, giving you confidence in the accuracy of your results. The critical capabilities needed to achieve this are:

- Validate that appropriate parameters are provided, process tasks are run in the correct sequence and all steps are accurately completed
- Scan reports, logs and other outputs for specific error messages, and check database values to verify that they are appropriate
- Send notifications to the responsible parties so they can take action to fix the issues

End-to-end automation improves accuracy, eliminating up to 90% of process errors, and removes the need for users to check the outcome

SECTION 5

Tracking and Managing Child Processes

Enterprise processes such as materials requirements planning, payroll and financial period end close comprise extremely complex tasks consisting of many concurrent requests. When these requests are launched, the parent process spawns many child processes. At this point they all become individual processes, with no apparent links between parent and child process. Many staff are needed to manually track these relationships, typically using an Excel spreadsheet. The sheer volume of child processes makes this an impossible task, with hundreds of child processes being missed and many errors slipping through when child processes fail.

Child processes need to be automatically kept under control, freeing up staff and preventing errors from slipping through. To address this issue, an automation solution is required—one that:

- Captures and tracks all parent and child processes kicked off by the parent processes
- Monitors the status of all parent and child processes to ensure successful completion on a business level
- Provides notification when failures occur

SECTION 6

Maintaining Processing Performance Under Heavy Volumes

Many enterprise processes will experience heavy volumes with time-critical deadlines at peak processing times, be it payroll, invoicing, dunning runs, material resource planning or financial period end close. Even when processing volumes aren't high enough to cause a total failure, they can result in additional latency between the completion of one request and the initiation of the next. While adding a couple of seconds between concurrent requests may not sound like it would cause problems, when you multiply those two seconds by 100,000 processes, significant delays can occur and processing deadlines are missed, which results in significant business impact and financial repercussions.

Like many ERP applications, Oracle E-Business Suite permits individuals to submit jobs. These are typically reports that provide the user with information on an ad hoc basis. This is a valuable feature, but ad hoc jobs can consume scarce computing resources, deflecting them away from high-priority processing jobs and often preventing them from completing on time.

To address these two issues, an automation solution is needed—one that:

- Prioritizes processing so tasks assigned to a high-priority queue will execute before lower-priority tasks
- Provides dynamic processing controls to Oracle E-Business Suite process initiation and works with other system performance analysis tools in order to dynamically increase or decrease throughput
- Identifies performance problems as they arise, and provides a resource-weighting capability so if one job is particularly more resource-intensive than the others, additional resources can be allocated to it
- Allows you to easily accommodate ad hoc jobs, knowing they will be captured and then processed in a timely fashion without compromising regular or high-priority operations

Integrated data transfer automation ensures zero latency and data errors

SECTION 7

Integrating File Transfers Into the Process

Whether it's moving data between remote locations, external business partners or internal systems, most enterprise processes rely on secure and fast file transfers.

A separate non-integrated and uncoordinated file transfer is an "unmanaged" file transfer approach, which introduces yet another disjointed island of automation and another weak link in the chain that makes up the enterprise process.

Management of file transfers typically relies on manual coordination or time-based scheduling, which is not only inefficient but also introduces inaccurate and incomplete data into the process.

An automation solution that has integrated managed file transfer capabilities is required to enhance the flow and the quality of data across enterprise processes. Having a fully automated, coordinated, managed file transfer provides consistent and reliable straight-through processing, making enterprises more predictable and creating fewer errors.

SECTION 8

Validation by Oracle

Oracle E-Business Suite processes are some of the most critical and complex processes upon which your organization relies. Oracle appreciates the complexities of its customers' environments and has worked extensively with a close set of partners to ensure that batch application integration, data integration and application scheduling have been addressed.

Automation of processes this complex and critical should only be entrusted to solutions that are the result of Oracle and a partner having worked together to develop a unique, fully supported solution for scheduling and automation of the Oracle E-Business Suite financial close process.

Oracle recommends that customers purchasing third-party value-added solutions look for the "Oracle Validation Integration" logo. Usage of the logo indicates that a solution has been designed in a reliable and standardized way, tested by Oracle as functionally and technically sound, and operates and performs as documented.

Benefits to Oracle customers purchasing third-party solutions that have been validated by Oracle include:



Shorter Implementation Time and Lower Integration Costs

Because solutions that have been validated for integration have been pre-tested, customers may benefit from accelerated integration projects that can be up-and-running out of the box.

Supportability

Usage of solutions that are validated for integration with Oracle solutions, which follow Oracle standards for technical integration and re-validation on a regular basis, can allow for upgrades with minimal interruptions.

Added Functionality

Oracle customers have the choice of a broad range of solutions that either extend functionality or enhance performance of their Oracle solutions.

SECTION 9

CA Automic Workload Automation

CA Automic Workload Automation enables you to reduce implementation time, accelerates business processes and provides true enterprise scheduling—within, around and beyond the Oracle E-Business Suite. Furthermore, CA Automic Workload Automation can alleviate the challenges in managing financial period-end close processing. CA's period-end close solution makes the process more predictable, manageable and accurate, as well as much faster. In fact, CA can shorten your period-end close by as much as 70 percent.

Your critical business processes stretch beyond Oracle E-Business Suite and rely on a mix of custom and packaged applications. To maximize your investment in Oracle E-Business Suite, you need to automate your business processes end-to-end. In doing so, you will regain control, dramatically shorten processing times, reduce costs and make all those last-minute scrambles to meet deadlines a thing of the past.

The key benefits you will gain from a solution such as CA Automic Workload Automation are:

- Visibility and control of the end-to-end process
- Full coordination of every step of the process across both Oracle E-Business Suite and other applications
- Automatic checks for process errors by validating parameters and checking outputs
- Automatic tracking and management of child processes
- Running of processes in parallel
- Integration of file transfers into the process
- Ability to trust your most critical processes to a solution that has been validated by Oracle

While there are many other factors that are also important to consider, only by ensuring that your solution encompasses the above key capabilities as a foundation can you be certain that you will be able to meet the ever-increasing demands of the business.

For more information, please visit ca.com/automation

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