

EMA Radar™ For Business Service Management (BSM): Service Impact Q3 2010 OPNET Vendor Profile

by Dennis Drogseth, Vice President
Enterprise Management Associates (EMA)

June 2010



OPNET

Vendor Products included in the evaluation: OPNET Panorama[®], ACE LIVE[™], ACE[™] Analyst, ACE[™] Enterprise Management Server, and OPNET nCompass[®].

Value Category: Value Leader

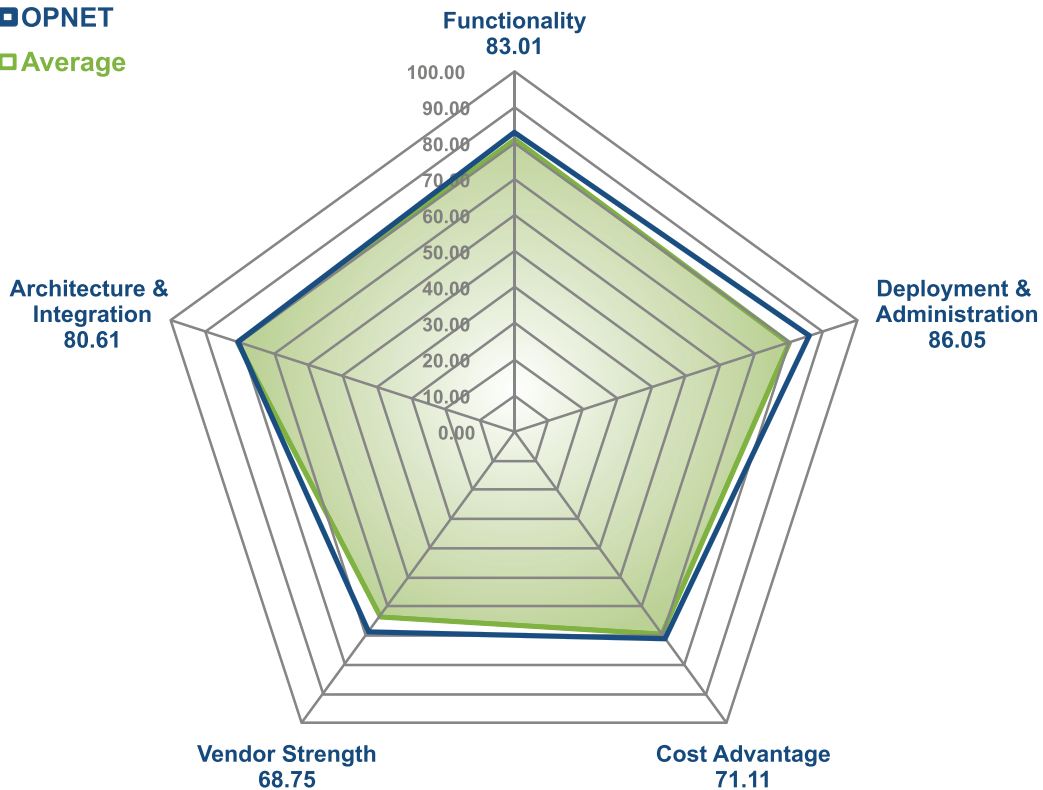
Feature or Category Award: Best Operational BSM



Best Operational BSM
EMA Radar[™] For Business Service
Management (BSM): Service Impact



■ OPNET
□ Average



Introduction

OPNET has evolved far beyond its original, network management roots to become a true service management vendor. OPNET has one of the most advanced set of management offerings in the industry for capturing application-and-infrastructure interdependencies from a performance impact perspective, and views these interdependencies dynamically at multiple levels. In part through the power of this multi-dimensional model, OPNET can claim industry leadership in BSM Service Impact especially for Operations, applications support and Q/A Test environments seeking to understand service impact from diverse roles and requirements.

OPNET rightly stresses its ability to “bridge the gap from high level to low level analysis,” with a strong focus on flexibility and real-time currency. Somewhat more quietly, OPNET still holds some very important jewels for optimizing infrastructure, evaluating network change for compliance and risk, and assimilating multiple topologies and infrastructure interdependencies.

Finally, OPNET has made major investments in ensuring that large components in its portfolio are easily deployed, with packaging in appliance-based solutions, and automation for “self configuring” and “learning” environments.

OPNET is currently enhancing and repackaging its portfolio, some but not all of which is captured here. These changes include a new focus on application dependency mapping, as well as enhancements in database management and user experience management, all central to BSM Service Impact.

The solutions included for OPNET’s BSM Service Impact assessment are: OPNET Panorama[®], ACE LIVE[™], ACE[™] Analyst, ACE[™] Enterprise Management Server, and OPNET nCompass[®].

Deployment and Administration

OPNET offers an appliance-based solution in ACE Live and has otherwise invested in significant levels of automation and self-tuning across its broader portfolio to speed deployment. ACE Enterprise Management Server (EMS) is targeted agent administration for ACE Analyst so that agent placement is relatively fast and easy. Other solutions are agentless and largely self-adaptive to the environment, with minimal overhead for discovery and dynamically defined baselines. The new nCompass dashboard significantly improves ease of customization and navigation for the administrator.

OPNET offers professional services directed at supporting both deployment requirements and helping its customers reach task-specific objectives such as application troubleshooting and analysis, user experience monitoring, and other primarily operational requirements.

Cost Advantage

OPNET’s BSM portfolio includes its own monitoring, for the most part, and as such is priced so that mid-tier enterprise, as well as larger enterprises and public sector organizations can invest effectively in BSM Service Impact. Starting deployments that include nCompass and multiple monitoring solutions will begin at about \$200K.

Architecture and Integration

OPNET supports a wide-range of discovery requirements in support of networks, systems, applications, and increasingly, databases. OPNET’s roots are monitoring across infrastructure and application interdependencies, rather than a device or box-centric approach, which in many respects has served it well to step up to BSM Service Impact requirements.

ACE Live’s agentless discovery maps application flows over the network and discovers ports, protocols and URLs out-of-the-box, as well as packet-based identification of application and component traffic, with supplemental NetFlow support. ACE Live recognizes hundreds of business applications out-of-the-box, including Microsoft Exchange, SAP, Oracle, DB2, MS SQL, SOAP, and Citrix.

Panorama discovers application components such as ASP.NET pages, EJBs, servlets, JSPs, Operating Systems, generic classes, and database calls through the broad set of metrics reported by its agents.

OPNET’s VNE Server[®] subsystem (which supports both ACE Live and nCompass) maintains an integrated view of the network, including physical and logical topology, device configuration, protocol configuration, and traffic flow data. VNE Server provides a view of layer 2/3 dependencies by collecting

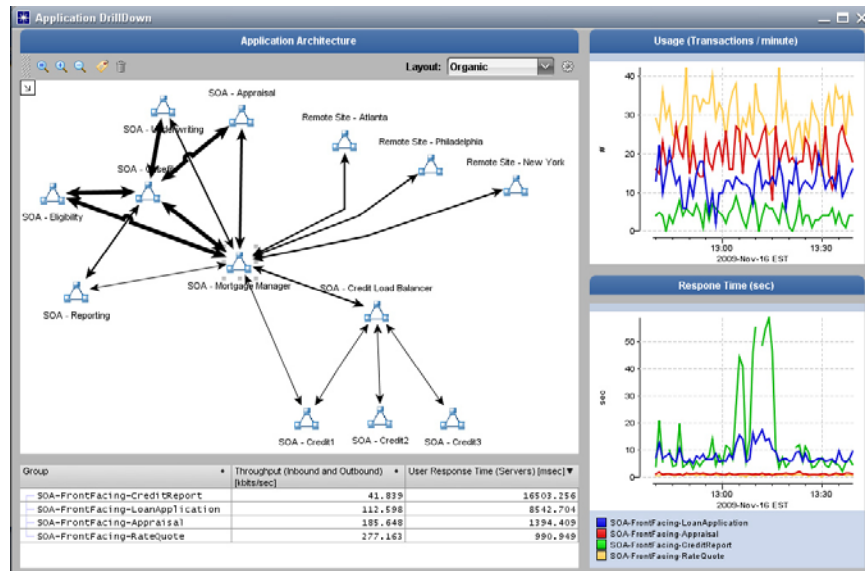


detailed information on the network infrastructure, and network devices such as load balancers, proxies, firewalls, security devices, SSL accelerators, and WAN accelerators.

OPNET's service model is grounded in its capability for application dependency mapping at a performance management level and as such is largely self-populating and self-creating. OPNET can draw on metadata such as WSDL and UDDI to build Layer 7 application models. Once the model is established and saved as a template, it can be linked to logical entities (customer/organizations/business outcomes), while also providing operational value in drill-down and diagnostics. It includes what OPNET calls "a blend of application component metrics and forensic traces, network flow and application packet trace data."

VNE Server is critical in supporting third-party integrations and supports trusted source prioritization. Some of the third-party brands supported include IBM Tivoli NetCool, CA eHealth, SolarWinds, Orion HP NAS, Cisco Info Center, CiscoWorks, and MRTG, as well as support for reconciling Syslog events and SNMP traps more generally. OPNET supports Remedy and other service desk integrations for outbound trouble ticketing.

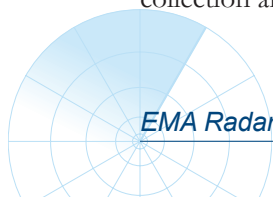
For virtualized environments, ACE Live VMon collects and manages application performance within virtualized servers. ACE Live VMon runs as a guest OS and spans traffic from the virtual switch to restore visibility of the communications for the applications that are hosted on virtual servers. OPNET has committed plans to support Citrix Xen and Microsoft Hyper-V in future. It should be pointed out that all of OPNET's agents can support virtualized or hybrid environments, and Panorama also has instrumentation (VMware DA) specifically for virtualized platforms.



OPNET has one of the most advanced set of management offerings in the industry for capturing application-and-infrastructure interdependencies from a performance impact perspective, and views these interdependencies dynamically at multiple levels.

Functionality

ACE Live provides visibility into transactions and their users across the enterprise, including detailed information on end-user response times, utilization, route quality, ISP performance, and traffic patterns. ACE Live also provides real-time packet level monitoring and analysis for full Web pages, NetFlow collection and utilization reporting, and VoIP call quality monitoring and troubleshooting.



ACE™ Analyst is a transaction analysis solution that uses agents along with other sources to capture application traces. It diagnoses performance problems utilizing over 700 application and protocol decodes. It also provides predictive “what-if” capabilities to support pre-deployment application assessments and infrastructure tuning, as well as troubleshooting difficult, iterative application performance issues.

Panorama monitors Java and .NET applications throughout the application lifecycle, beginning with test/QA, and continuing through deployment and operations. To do this, Panorama continuously monitors thousands of system and application metrics, including method-level visibility into application code. Panorama also integrates with ACE Live to pull network-related metrics into Panorama’s correlation engine to provide a holistic view into service performance from both the network and the application perspective. Panorama’s correlation technology automatically detects patterns in metrics and events, and identifies cause-and-effect relationships. For SOA environments, URLs that represent Web Services can be incorporated into Panorama’s application model as well. Panorama includes three distinct analysis engines: metric correlation, transaction tracing, and what OPNET calls “integrated, always-on memory analysis.”

OPNET’s support for user experience management leverages these multiple sources, but is centered in ACE Live for passive monitoring of user experience pervasively across the infrastructure. It is targeted at the full Web page level, and can organize pages into families based on business process or other logical association.

The new nCompass dashboard is a striking advance in OPNET’s portfolio, and grew out of an earlier, more limited NetCop solution targeted primarily at the network war room. But nCompass is a true BSM Service Impact dashboard and supports the full portfolio indicated here. It is well designed, and easily customized, and focused on both operational drill-down and diagnostics, as well as supportive of more executive-level requirements.

Vendor Strength

OPNET is an established mid-sized vendor in network and application performance with special strengths in government, defense, telecommunications, financial services, healthcare and a wide range of other verticals. It has an established set of partners including resellers and systems integrators designed to expand its international base.

Strengths and Limitations

OPNET’s BSM Service Impact strengths are:

- Pervasive monitoring and diagnostics across networks, systems and applications with advanced multi-dimensional modeling of application and application-to-infrastructure interdependencies.
- Service modeling populated from these interdependencies that can link in logical and physical associations including business-related categories.
- A new BSM optimized dashboard (nCompass) that adds to these capabilities superior levels of navigation and ease of customized, role-based views.
- OPNET’s service models can assimilate business metrics from third-party sources.
- Well established capabilities to assimilate infrastructure-related topologies and performance information with a trusted source concept from a wide variety of third-party sources.



- Some support for change impact analysis in terms of what/if analysis for applications/packages, network configuration changes, and resilient capabilities to assess behavioral changes across application and transaction-centric service models. OPNET's ACE Live has been used with great effectiveness to validate that changes to the infrastructure are non-service disruptive.
- Substantial and growing support for user experience management.
- OPNET has a well evolved customer base in network operations, applications support, and increasingly, applications development and Q/A Test.

OPNET's BSM Service Impact limitations are:

- OPNET is targeted at what might be called "operational" BSM Service Impact, versus more process-centric or configuration-centric approaches.
- While OPNET has built-in a lot of automation into the inner workings of its products, it does not yet have platform-level automation in areas such as ITPA (run book) or active configuration (release) management.
- OPNET does not offer a CMDB.
- OPNET for business executives and service management executives outside of operations is still evolving.



About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

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](#).

This report in whole or in part may not be duplicated, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or retransmitted without prior written permission of Enterprise Management Associates, Inc. All opinions and estimates herein constitute our judgement as of this date and are subject to change without notice. Product names mentioned herein may be trademarks and/or registered trademarks of their respective companies. “EMA” and “Enterprise Management Associates” are trademarks of Enterprise Management Associates, Inc. in the United States and other countries.

©2010 Enterprise Management Associates, Inc. All Rights Reserved. EMA™, ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES®, and the mobius symbol are registered trademarks or common-law trademarks of Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Corporate Headquarters:
5777 Central Avenue, Suite 105
Boulder, CO 80301
Phone: +1 303.543.9500
Fax: +1 303.543.7687
www.enterprisemanagement.com



2100-OPNET.071310