

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# CA airing data center automation

## CA develops technology that enables IT to delegate duties

**BY DENISE DUBIE**

CA this week plans to unveil its data center automation product that industry watchers say will help IT staff offload server resource-provisioning duties and give CA an advantage over competitors BMC and HP.

CA Data Center Automation (DCA) Manager r11.2 will let customers automate systems monitoring and resource provisioning. The software competes with technology HP acquired with Opware and BMC bought with BladeLogic. CA developed its product in-house, which industry watchers say could give the company an edge if competitors are still working to integrate acquired software.

"CA's seemingly slow progress on the DCA technology is a sign of an internal design approach which might just be the right one," says Evelyn Hubbert, senior analyst with Forrester Research. "Acquisitions are always challenged by architectures, which need to be matched or modified mostly to the disadvantage of the client. CA knows its architecture and can design integrations and extensions from the ground up."

For instance, DCA Manager will integrate software for network and systems management as well as ties to Wily Introscope 8 and Customer Experience Manager 4.2 products for application performance management, which also are scheduled to be announced this week.

DCA Manager runs on a server and works with existing agents in a customer environment to gather information and trigger events. The software collects system software and hardware configuration information, discovers applications and their dependencies, and detects change

across the environment. Integration with existing products also give the software access to network availability, application performance and business service management data, which CA says can help automate resource allocation based on demand.

"The software includes algorithms and policy-based management features that, for instance, can compare how application performance correlates to resource consumption. Based on that information, DCA Manager can determine if resources need to be provisioned," says Stephen Elliot, vice president of strategy for CA's Infrastructure Management and Data Center Automation business unit (and a former IDC analyst).

DCA Manager monitors utilization and performance across mixed-platform data center environments. The data can then be fed into customizable dashboards that give data center managers a view of their physical and heterogeneous virtual environments, a capability many vendors are looking to offer, analysts say.

"It's unclear at this point if the market for data center automation products is tied to hardware, which could be HP's selling point, virtualization platforms like VMware and Microsoft or third-party software that can handle heterogeneous hardware, operating systems and virtual technologies," says Mary Johnston Turner, senior analyst with Enterprise Strategies Group.

CA says the DCA Manager software also can be used to provision resources on a scheduled basis, letting customers delegate duties. For instance, a self-service feature lets non-IT staff schedule desired resources for specific applications or events at the university. Once scheduled, DCA Manager will use images and tem-

plates built by Husain's staff to automatically provision the server capacity for the assigned function. When the need is no longer there, the resources can be reclaimed by IT.

"When it comes to management, IT decision makers list the impact on IT staff and cost as the top factors they consider. CA's self-service reservation management systems gets IT in part out of the workflow and lets end users schedule resources for themselves," Turner says. "Technology that saves on staff time and keeps the business going is compelling, and right now investing in automation tools is really going to pay back for IT."

Naveed Husain, CIO at Queens College, a City University of New York public educational institution, is conducting a proof of concept on CA DCA Manager. He says the software, which is not fully implemented, could help him manage more than 100 Dell servers running Windows and Linux operating systems and supporting more than 20,000 students, staff, faculty and other employees — without adding head count. And with virtualization on the horizon, Husain realized he couldn't postpone an investment in infrastructure monitoring and automation technology any longer.

"It's embarrassing to have built a high-availability environment with redundancy and failover and get calls because disk utilization on a server is over 75% and you didn't know because you can't have human eyes on all the servers all the time," Husain says. "At the low end we would pay \$36,000 for a help desk position and then anywhere between \$60,000 and \$90,000 for senior IT staff. Because I can't invest in staff, I am going to invest in this automation tool." ■