

CA Introduces “Cross Enterprise Application Performance Management,” Bridging the Distributed and Mainframe Silos for APM

Abstract

On October 26, 2009, CA announced “Cross Enterprise Application Performance Management,” an enhanced set of integrated, mainframe-inclusive Application Performance Management (APM) solutions. Cross Enterprise APM integrates the deep monitoring capabilities of CA Wily Application Performance Management with those of CA SYSVIEW® Performance Management 12.5. CA Wily is well-known as an industry leader in the distributed application performance management space, while CA SYSVIEW is a leading z/OS mainframe monitoring solution. The enhancements feature a consolidated and customizable dashboard with drill-down into composite applications running across both heterogeneous, non-mainframe systems and IBM’s Customer Information Control System (CICS) running on a z/OS mainframe.

The enhancements extend CA’s support for mixed application environments that touch the mainframe, where both distributed and mainframe visibility are key requirements for “enterprise ready” management solutions. ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) analysts see these announcements as a major step forward for CA, as application support professionals are increasingly demanding better mainframe visibility as part of end-to-end transaction and application support.

The enhancements extend CA’s support for mixed application environments that touch the mainframe.

IT Transformation: From Managing Technology to Managing the Business Service

While today’s companies increasingly rely on IT as a business enabler, IT services continue to grow in complexity. Distributed and composite services often span multiple applications and platforms, as well as virtual technologies and Cloud services. They integrate with one another, and with the systems of external partners and customers. Each connection point, software module, and network segment adds complexity and potential risk in terms of availability and performance. As a result, the rise of these complex services is forcing changes to IT roles and processes, as well as to application management solutions.

Technology-savvy companies are leveraging cross-functional teams and collaborative processes to manage this heterogeneity. They are also moving beyond silo tools to integrated solutions that better address these increasingly diverse and interconnected technology environments.

Often, discussions about distributed application management exclude consideration of the mainframe. The assumption seems to be that companies run “either” mainframe “or” distributed applications. In fact, many companies run both, and it is often the case that distributed transactions execute across both mainframe and non-mainframe platforms. EMA research finds that of the world’s largest companies¹, 70% are running mainframe applications, and 64% are running Service Oriented Architecture (SOA), Web applications, and/or Web Services. It is little wonder that “end-to-end application management” is the goal for so many of today’s enterprise management vendors, and the “holy grail” for IT support teams.

¹ Those with 20,000 or more employees

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While leading companies have made the transition from managing technology silos to managing business services, most are still in the process of evolving. Distributed applications are hastening this evolution, as IT support teams find they cannot adequately support critical business services without cross-functional collaboration and products – they are simply too complex.

Recent EMA research found that almost 60% of IT organizations surveyed are supporting distributed applications that span both mainframe and non-mainframe platforms. When asked about the challenges of supporting such services, their responses were revealing:

- “We are unable to pinpoint sources and causes of problems.”
- “Applications are unstable.”
- “Can’t get less than 30 second response time.”
- “Can’t see transaction and data flow between tiers.”

Integrations such as those CA has introduced with its APM enhancements help such teams address the challenge of supporting business services. They provide a basis for solving the unique problems of cross-platform distributed services much more efficiently than products supporting “either” mainframe or “distributed” transactions. They can help IT organizations address challenges such as those listed above, which are extremely difficult (and expensive!) to solve without an integrated toolset.

Details of the Announcements

CA SYSVIEW and CA Wily APM are both mature solutions, each with more than 1,000 existing customer sites. CA SYSVIEW is a real-time performance monitoring and management solution. Its coverage includes the mainframe z/OS operating system, and its subsystems, including CICS, IMS, CA Datacom®/DB, TCP/IP, WebSphere MQ, UNIX Systems Services, JES2, and JES3.

CA Wily is often cited by other vendors as the “gold standard” for distributed application performance management, the product line to beat in competitive sales situations. It supports applications running on IBM® WebSphere® Application Server (WAS) (on z/OS and z/LINUX), as well as mainframe and database views from the distributed environment.

These newly announced enhancements extend support to Customer Information Control System transactions and IBM WebSphere MQ messaging. The enhanced integration provides detailed diagnostics and deep-dive triage, and includes:

- Real-time consolidated dashboards for aggregated monitoring of mainframe and distributed applications.
- Transaction tracing across distributed systems and into CICS and MQ within the mainframe environment and its subsystems.
- Visibility to the application in context to its underlying execution fabric for end-to-end triage, troubleshooting, and problem resolution.

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Under the covers and in real-time, CA Wily traces transactions and “tags” those interacting with CICS. Tags provide the means to measure “spin time” at each tier, as well as other calculated metrics. An agent-based connector mediates across the two solutions, transforming and uploading CA SYSVIEW metrics to the CA Wily APM dashboards in near real-time.

Since CA SYSVIEW and CA Wily Introscope® previously quantified metrics in different ways, these enhancements have rationalized reporting across both platforms. This provides the basis for new views and reports, including cross-technology time correlations, which are critical to connecting the impact of an application component utilization spike, for example, to poor transaction performance. In-depth traces can also be run from a workstation, providing additional depth into the execution details of cross-platform Java/.NET transactions. In addition, Average CPU time, Average Suspend Time, and other trending metrics (see Figure 1) can be displayed for CICS transaction groups.

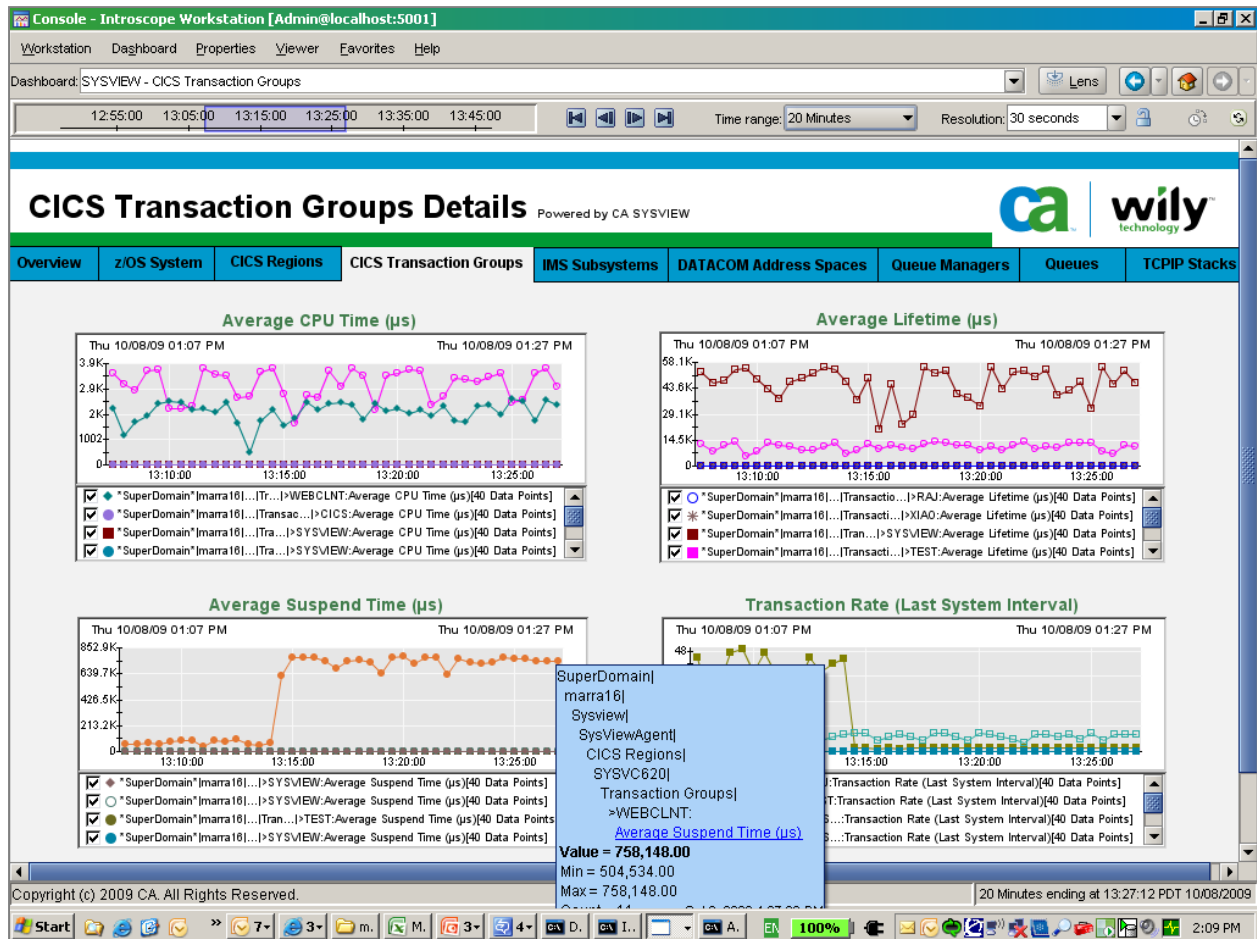


Figure 1: CICS Transaction Groups help associate mainframe resources with the applications they support.

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Key Benefits

- **CICS and MQ Transaction Tracing, CICS Transaction Context, Integrated Dashboard:** Transaction tracing through CICS and MQ reveals execution and messaging details that are critical for identifying and isolating application and transaction performance problems. Transaction context relates distributed transactions to CICS resources, revealing the impact of the transaction on mainframe resources. New *Distributed to Mainframe Enterprise Dashboards* offer an integrated view of the entire transaction, with drill-down into execution and dependency details.
- **Quicker detection and remediation of distributed application performance problems:** For the world’s largest companies, application management solutions that don’t adequately address the mainframe are viewed as partial solutions. Integrated solutions such as CA APM ensure that the mainframe value propositions – high availability and performance – are safeguarded.
- **Mitigation of the effects of silos across technologies, time, and geographies:** In many companies, execution platforms and technology support are distributed across cities, states, or countries. At best, mainframe teams are locked in the data center. At worst, the mainframe is located in one country, and Windows/Linux servers in another. Focal interviews show that cross-tier troubleshooting can take weeks of time, putting the business at risk and consuming the time of IT’s most valuable (and highly-paid) technicians. Solutions like CA’s cross-enterprise APM help mitigate this problem by providing a common source of application-related intelligence across heterogeneous technology. This can promote collaboration and speed problem analysis and remediation.

These new capabilities are complementary to the TRILOGexpert solutions (resold by CA), which extend CA’s APM offering with advanced application performance analysis that helps uncover tuning opportunities. TRILOGexpert TriTune® identifies lines of problem-causing code with detailed application performance metrics. TRILOGexpert APCT™ for TriTune® with Performance Desktop proactively highlights potential performance problems by isolating the root causes of unnecessary resource consumption and other application-related problems.

EMA Perspective

CA is making a sizable investment in strengthening its mainframe management story, and for good reason. For enterprise-sized businesses, the entrenched mainframe base shows all indications of remaining strong for the foreseeable future. Companies that can’t afford the performance, availability, and security risks of non-mainframe platforms turn to the mainframe to deliver solid reliability that has evolved over many years. From this perspective, CA’s mainframe investments will likely prove to be fruitful.

These enhancements improve the overall value proposition of CA’s APM solutions in multiple ways, one of which is from the organizational perspective. EMA still sees many IT organizations that are bogged down with tools and processes supporting silo-based management. While support silos will of necessity remain a fact of life for the foreseeable future, management solutions such as this one help span silos and move towards better cross-functional application support. Cross-technology, cross-enterprise views of transactions and applications offer a common ground for IT engineers speaking different technology (and often different human) languages. Incorporating the mainframe fills out the distributed transaction “big picture,” bringing the mainframe team into the cross-functional fold as well.

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CA’s hardware vendor independence will likely be an attraction to prospects, as will the strengths of this offering – depth of integration, breadth of coverage, and a more lightweight installation and maintenance footprint than many competitors. Nevertheless, there are keen competitors in this space, with IBM and BMC both seriously gunning for a bigger slice of the distributed mainframe pie. CA’s success will depend on the ability to articulate messaging and clear differentiators to those IT constituencies with the biggest APM headaches.

That being said, EMA sees these announcements as positive news for CA customers and non-customers alike. For CA customers with mainframes and either CA Wily or SYSVIEW already in place, evaluation of the enhanced, integrated solutions should be a no-brainer. For companies lacking APM solutions, and even those with competing solutions in place, lingering pain points may well provide an impetus to reevaluate.

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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).

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