

IT, AUTOMATE THYSELF: MANAGING PROCESSES ACROSS MULTI-APPLICATION ENVIRONMENTS

OAUG Survey on IT Automation Strategies

**Joseph McKendrick, Research Analyst
January 2008**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many organizations are adopting business process automation to increase the efficiencies of their operations, but, ironically, only have begun to automate IT itself. The need to automate IT processes is pressing. Not only are data center infrastructures becoming more complex, but so are IT processes - such as incident management, server provisioning. Add to this complexity the challenge of managing processes that span across multiple brands of enterprise applications - such as Oracle E-Business Suite to PeopleSoft to SAP - within a single enterprise.

A survey among members of the Oracle Applications Users Group (OAUG), conducted by Unisphere Research in partnership with UC4 Software (formerly known as AppWorx), sought to explore the challenges and opportunities of IT process automation across multiple applications. The survey found that most organizations are having difficulties managing these mixed environments, and most do not yet have a clear strategy for managing processes that extend across these applications.

The survey, conducted in December 2007, was announced via an email notification to the OAUG membership list, which directed participants to a Web-based survey instrument. A total of 344 responses were collected by the survey deadline. Survey respondents represented a cross-section of Oracle applications sites. Respondents' job titles ranged from that of IT director and manager (23%) to business analyst (18%) and developer/programmer (17%).

Respondents also represented a wide range of sizes of organizations from many industries. (See Figures 24 through 27 in the Appendix at the end of this report for more details on respondent demographics.) At the top of the scale, 25 percent came from organizations with more than 10,000 employees, and 29 percent said their companies have more than a billion dollars in revenues each year.

Another 27 percent represented companies with fewer than 1,000 employees. By industry, the largest segment of respondents, about 26 percent, came from manufacturing companies, while 14 percent represented government, educational, or non-profit organizations. Another nine percent indicated they are with the utility, transportation, or communications sector, and eight percent are with financial services organizations.

Key findings include the following:

- ➔ Two out of three survey respondents reported that difficulties in adequately monitoring and managing processes that span multiple applications have resulted in delays for the business, either in time to market or ability to integrate.
- ➔ Automation is helping address some IT process issues, but progress is slow. Three out of four operations still either depend on manual scripting, or simply don't know what approaches they should take.
- ➔ Most organizations turn to IT process automation to reduce the amount of staff time consumed by routine or manual tasks. However, in many cases, there is little room in corporate budgets for extensive business process management (BPM) solutions that provide automated modeling, management, and monitoring capabilities.
- ➔ About a third of organizations are looking at solutions being put forth by Oracle - Fusion, BPEL, and AIA. However, a majority of organizations are undecided or unclear about the viability of these strategies as integration platforms.

IT process automation is critical, as IT infrastructures grow increasingly complex, beyond the capabilities of IT staff to effectively address issues. Organizations are increasingly turning to IT automation tools to potentially alleviate the burden on IT staff of repetitive or manual processes.

Many IT executives in this survey understand the urgency of automating such tasks. As one respondent, an IT director with a large pharmaceutical firm, put it: "As we strive for more tightly integrated systems and towards cutting costs to support and maintain applications we know we need to stay technically close to the leading edge. We also need to understand the technologies, as we are an implementer and will be rolling out automation strategies to our clients as well."

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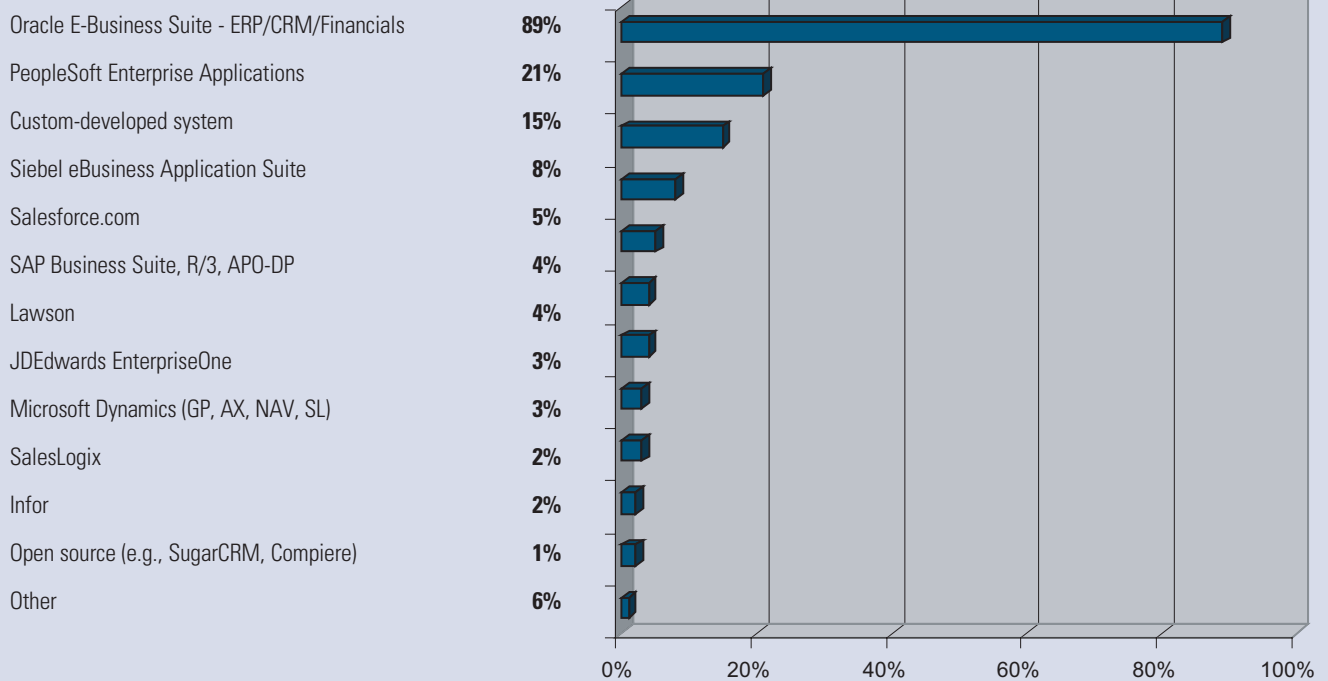
Still, many respondents see the potential of middleware and more standardized process management. One respondent, an IT consultant with a large utility, sees IT process automation as the best route to "hopefully increase transparency of processes, throughout all systems, and lead to reduction of complexity, and help users to more easily and quickly accept changes/new technologies."

MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS, MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

Two out of three survey respondents reported that difficulties in adequately monitoring and managing processes that span multiple applications have resulted in delays for the business, either in time to market or ability to integrate.

Since respondents to this survey are members of OAUG, it can be assumed that for most, their organizations are heavily vested in Oracle E-Business Suite. Indeed, 89 percent of the respondents to the survey run Oracle E-Business Suite. (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1: Enterprise Applications in Surveyed Organizations

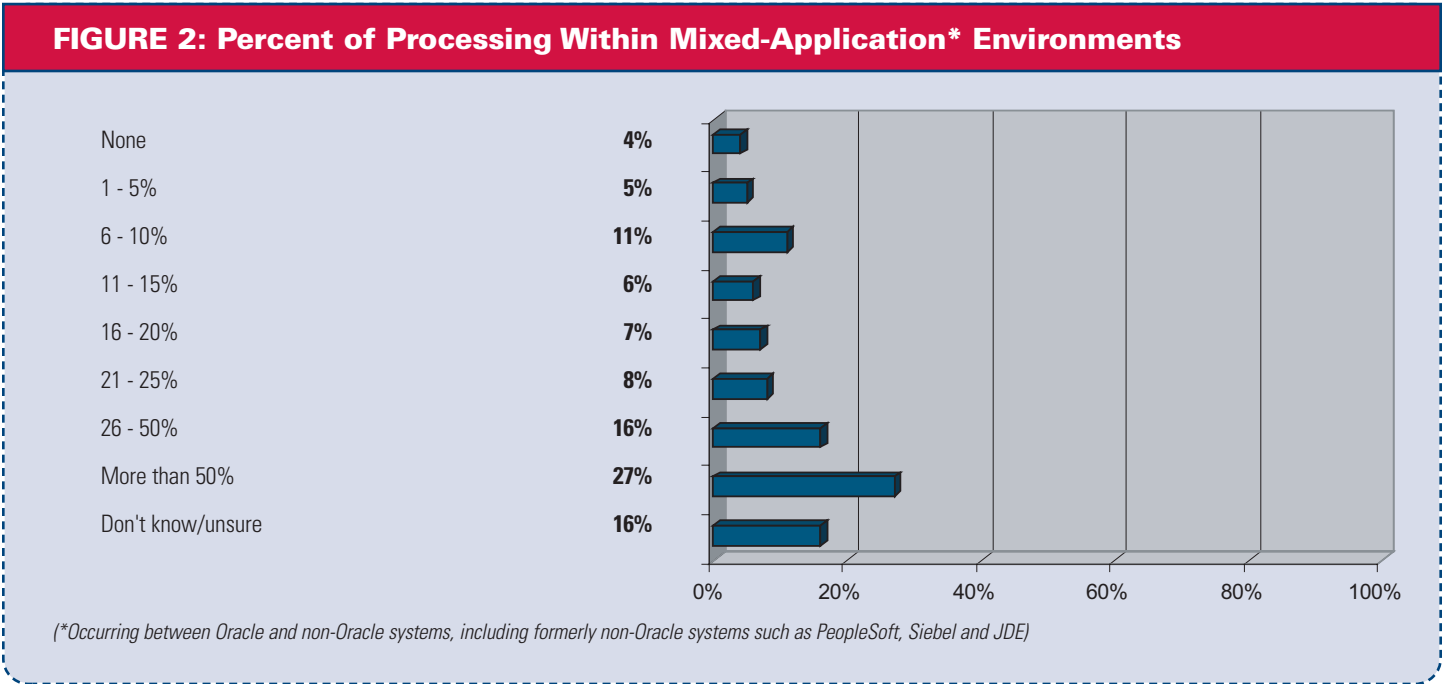


However, there is diversity of enterprise applications under the roofs of this avid group of Oracle E-Business Suite users. In total, 49 percent reported that they also run other brands of applications along with Oracle E-Business. A total of 21 percent, for example, said they run PeopleSoft Enterprise Applications. Eight percent also run Siebel at their sites. (For purposes of this survey, PeopleSoft, JDEdwards, and Siebel are considered "non-Oracle" systems, though they have been acquired by Oracle.) Five percent use Salesforce.com, and four percent are also SAP shops. About 15 percent of respondents said they employ custom-developed enterprise systems to help run their enterprises.

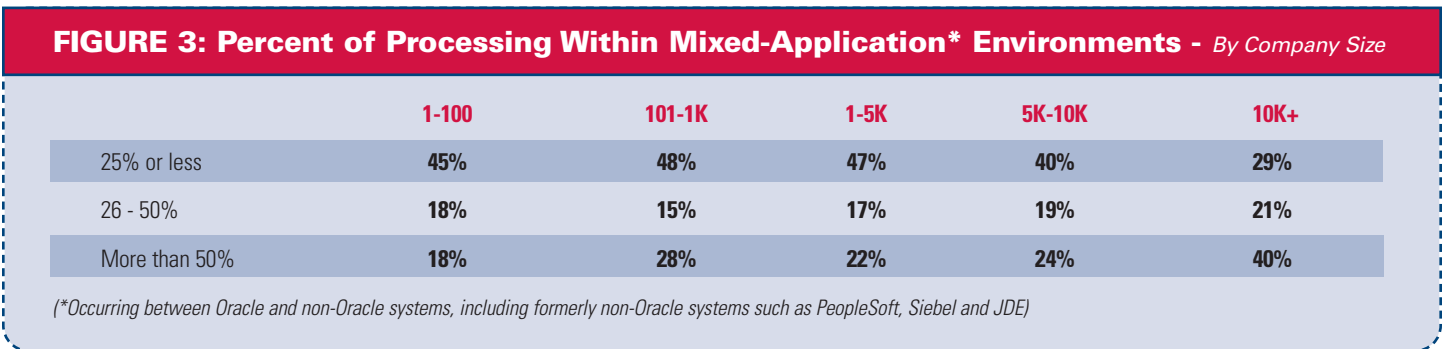
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Just about every company participating in the survey runs at least some processes across these mixed application environments. Eight out of 10 respondents reported that parts of their mission-critical processing span multiple applications. More than a quarter of respondents, 27 percent, said that the majority of their mission-critical IT processing load takes place in these mixed environments, meaning that data or workloads is exchanged between their Oracle systems and another type of systems. (See Figure 2.)



The percentage of mixed-application environments is similar across most sizes of companies, except for the very largest organizations. About 18 percent of the smallest firms in the survey (100 or fewer employees) reported that a majority of their applications are managed within mixed environments, a number that climbs to 40 percent of large organizations with greater than 10,000 employees. (See Figure 3.)

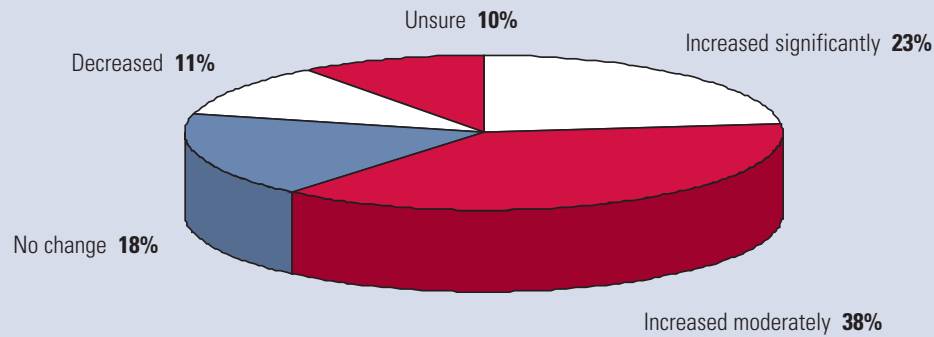


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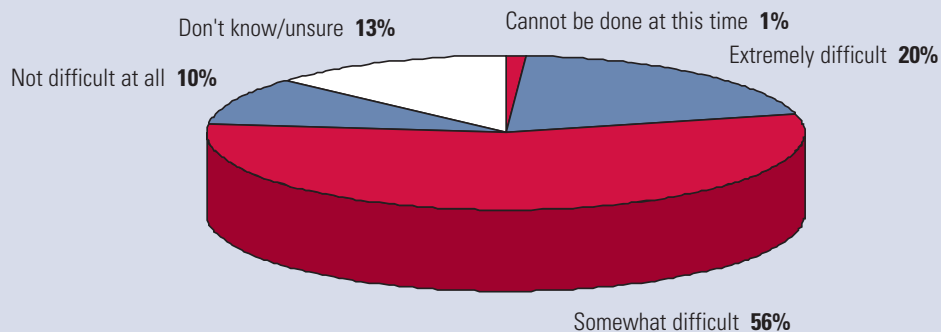
The prevalence of mixed-application environments is growing, the survey also found. Overall, 61 percent of respondents reported that the number of IT process dependencies handling various application environments has grown. Close to one out of four reported this number has grown "significantly" over the past year. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4: How Has This Number of IT Process Dependencies Changed?



More than three-quarters of the survey respondents, 77 percent, reported some degree of difficulty monitoring and managing processes that span multiple applications. At least 21 percent reported that this type of task is either "extremely" difficult, or they can't do it at all. (See Figure 5.)

FIGURE 5: Level of Difficulty in Monitoring/Managing Multi-Application Processes

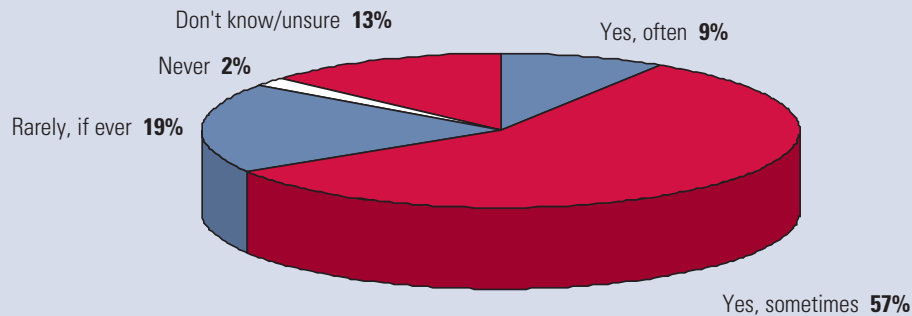


The difficulties incurred attempting to move data and manage or monitor processes that move between multiple applications are having a direct impact on business performance, the survey found. A total of 66 percent of respondents reported that the difficulty in adequately monitoring and managing processes that span multiple applications resulted in delays for the business, either in time to market or ability to integrate. (See Figure 6.)

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FIGURE 6: Has the Difficulty in Monitoring/Managing Multi-Application Processes Resulted in Delays for the Business?



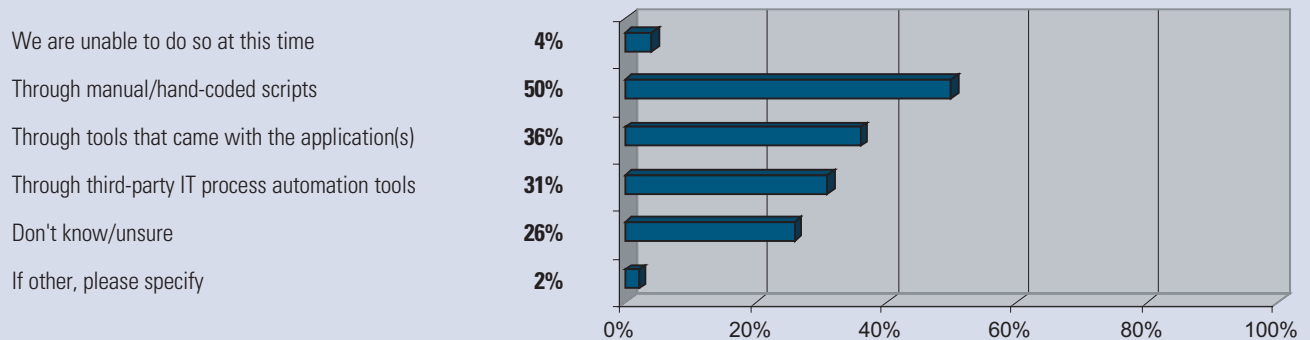
AUTOMATION ISSUES AND FUNCTIONS

Automation is helping address some IT process issues, but progress is slow. Three out of four operations still either depend on manual scripting, or simply don't know what approaches they should take.

IT process automation enables a more systematic and hands-free approach to accomplishing manual or repetitive tasks in the data center. Effective IT process automation requires business process management (BPM) capabilities, including workflow management, orchestration, and integration between various systems and components.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to putting automated processes in place is addressing the interactions between disparate platforms and applications. This may be a challenge that lies beyond the capabilities of many toolsets on the market. More than three-quarters of survey respondents, 77 percent, reported that they either employ manual scripting to enable applications to share processes with each other, or they simply don't know or can't do it at this time. Just over half of the survey respondents, 52 percent, reported they also employ some tools - either provided with the application, or from a third party. (The preceding figures are aggregated totals based on multiple responses. See Figure 7 for an item-by-item breakdown.)

FIGURE 7: How Multiple Application Processes are Monitored/Managed



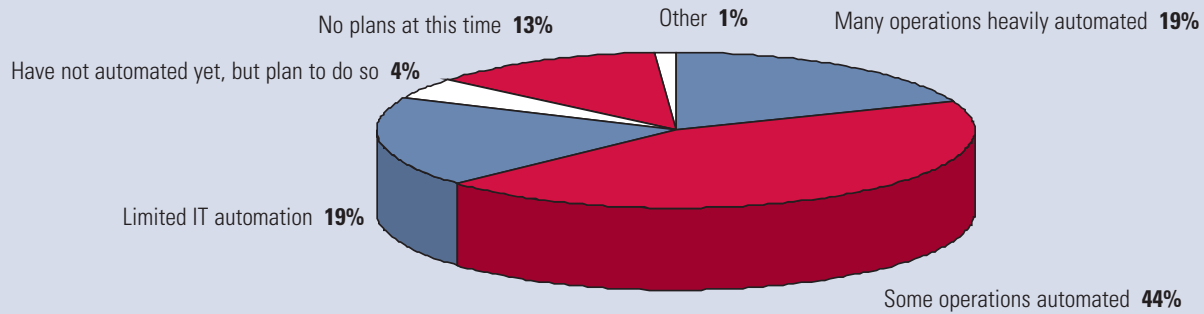
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The prevalence of manual scripting can lead to difficult management challenges, especially when it touches multiple application environments, many respondents agree. "Data consolidation is manual, and easily broken," said the DBA for a major manufacturer. "It requires several departments to correct, once a problem is found."

Nevertheless, IT automation is on the horizon for many companies. About 82 percent said they have at least some automation in place for their IT operations. Almost one out of five, 19 percent, said they are now "heavily automated," and another 63 percent said they have operated at least some of their operations in a limited capacity. (See Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8: Extent of IT Process Automation



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Automated backup and recovery is the function that most companies have automated, cited by 65 percent of respondents. Another three percent plan to add such capabilities within the next three years. More than half of the organizations in the survey, 55 percent, have job scheduling/workload automation solutions in place, with an additional six percent planning implementations in the future. (See Figure 9.)

FIGURE 9: IT Functions Currently Addressed Through IT Process Automation

	NOW	PLANNED IN NEXT 3 YRS
Automated backup and recovery	65%	3%
Job scheduling/workload automation	55%	6%
Performance and availability monitoring	41%	11%
Database automation/optimization	35%	9%
Asset and inventory management	33%	11%
Change and configuration management	32%	14%
Storage archiving and management	26%	10%
Compliance auditing and reporting	22%	16%
Configuration management database	18%	12%
Event management/console automation	18%	9%
Patch distribution	16%	16%
Virtual machine management	15%	6%
Capacity management	15%	12%
Chargebacks	9%	6%
Provisioning	10%	6%
Don't know/unsure	20%	47%
Other	2%	1%

Areas that will see the most growth over the next three years include automated patch distribution, which will double (16 percent today currently have this in place; another 16 percent plan to implement it). There will be up to 72 percent growth in compliance auditing and reporting automation tools, with 16 percent joining the current level of 22 percent.

The number of companies implementing configuration management databases (CMDBs) will grow by two-thirds with 18 percent currently supporting CMDBs and another 12 percent planning implementations. CMDBs are seen as a key component of many IT automation efforts, as they enable IT managers to create registries of IT assets and services.

Respondents continue to wrestle with a range of issues. As one respondent, an IT consultant with a legal service firm, noted, the greatest challenge is around "monitoring of processes that run too long due to performance issues." The respondent also said "monitoring of spikes in data growth" also presents challenges.

The ability to trace transactions, either for compliance or quality management purposes, also weighs heavily on the need to better automate IT processes across these multi-application environments. The key goal of automation is the ability to achieve "end-to-end visibility on a transaction flowing from one system to another, which, overall, improves the auditability," said one respondent.

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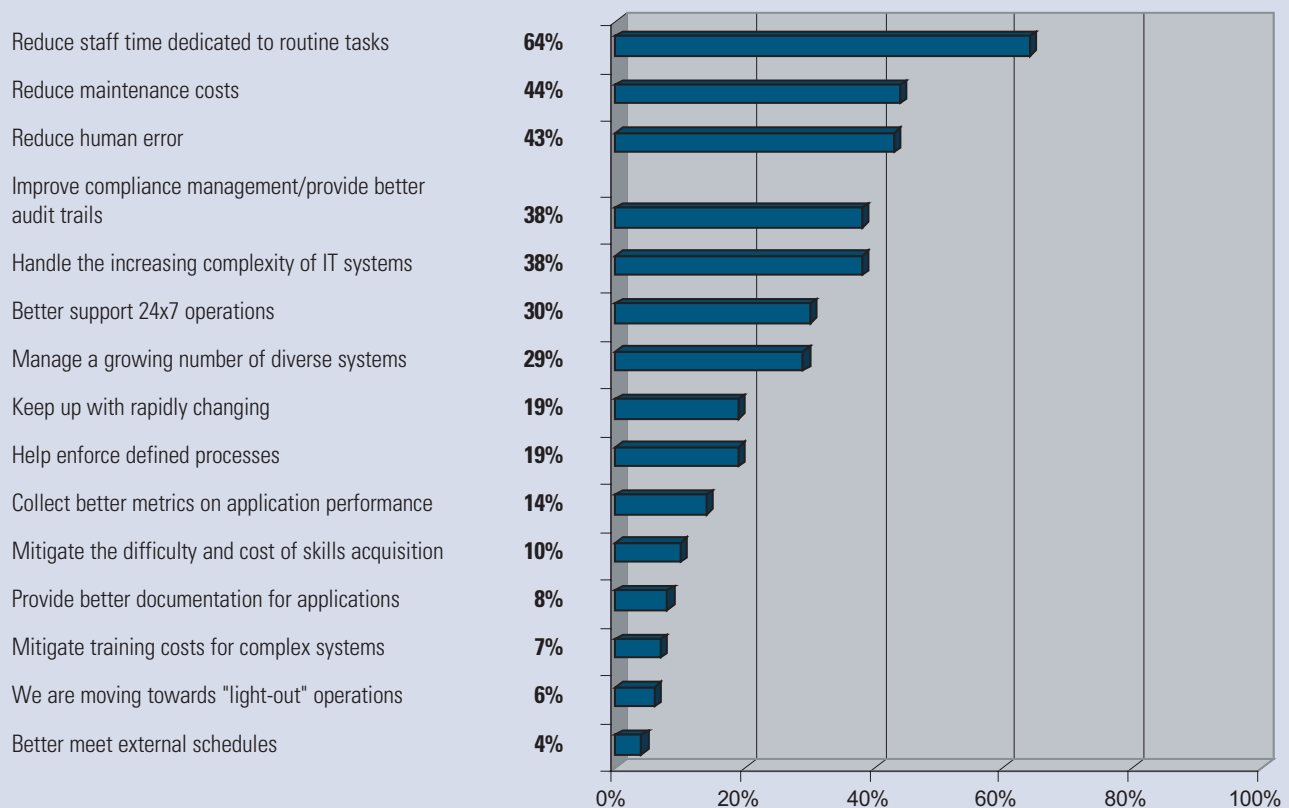
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Most organizations turn to IT process automation to reduce the amount of staff time consumed by routine or manual tasks. However, in many cases, there is little room in corporate budgets for extensive business process management (BPM) solutions that provide automated modeling, management, and monitoring capabilities.

IT process automation solutions enable IT departments to ramp up their efforts - particularly in more strategic, business-focused projects - without increasing their staff levels. For example, relatively mundane tasks such as reporting eat up considerable staff time. Previous OAUG surveys found that a majority of reports require accessing more than one application. The time spent in such tasks could be diverted to activities with greater value to the business, such as consulting with business units on better leveraging data for analytical purposes.

Almost two out of three companies agree with this premise - 64 percent said the main advantage from IT automation efforts is the ability to reduce staff time dedicated to routine tasks. Another 44 percent said IT automation helps them reduce maintenance costs, and a similar number cited the ability to take potential human errors out of the equation. Another 38 percent are focused on improving compliance management/providing better audit trails. (See Figure 10.)

FIGURE 10: Benefits of IT Process Automation Tools

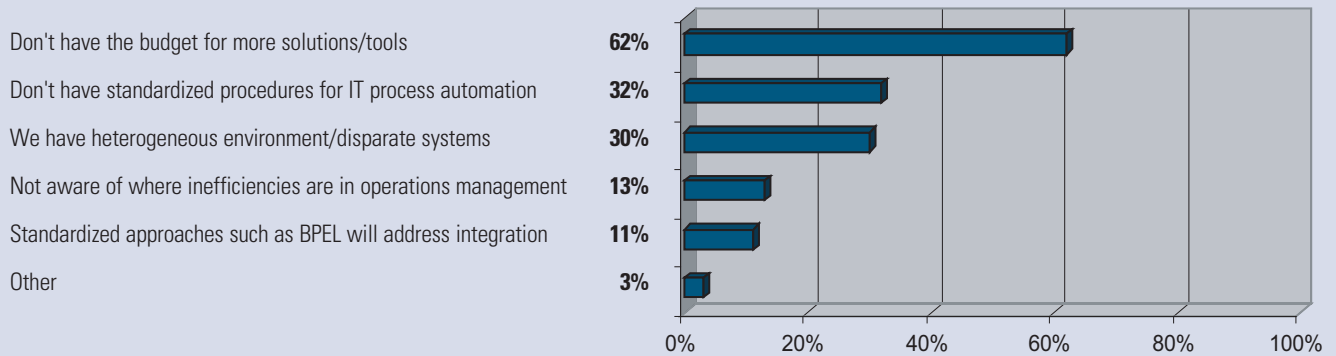


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However, most organizations cannot afford sophisticated BPM solutions that enable the modeling, management, and monitoring of multi-application processes in an automated fashion. Budgetary issues are the main challenge holding back more aggressive deployment of IT automation solutions, the survey finds. More than six out of 10 organizations, 62 percent, said they don't have the budget for more solutions or tools. Close to a third said they don't have standardized procedures for IT process automation, or that they are wrestling with the various issues that arise from having heterogeneous environment/disparate systems. As noted earlier in this report, about half of the respondents have a major applications platform along with Oracle E-Business Suite. (See Figure 11.)

FIGURE 11: Leading Challenges to IT Process Automation



"Change control is a major pain point," said one respondent, a CIO with a major manufacturing organization. "Satisfying SOX controls in terms of testing and sign-offs has become difficult. I would love to see an Oracle tool that does this - that does not cost an arm and a leg."

Overall, respondents understand the benefits IT process automation can bring to multi-application environments. "We have too many systems in place with a combination of ERP packages and lot of internal and third-party applications," said an executive with a large service firm. "Automation should be really helpful to get a holistic view of some of our processes."

INTEGRATION PLATFORMS

About a third of organizations are looking at solutions being put forth by Oracle - Fusion, BPEL, and AIA. A majority of organizations are undecided or unclear about the viability of these strategies as integration platforms.

With the rise of middleware, organizations are looking at moving much of their application functionality to layers that support more standardized, service-oriented approaches to development and deployment. This is certainly the stated strategy of Oracle, which seeks to eventually migrate E-Business Suite, PeopleSoft, and Siebel users to a common architecture. This will also incorporate applications outside the Oracle sphere as well.

Will such middleware approaches help propel IT process automation, as well? A service-oriented architecture (SOA) approach can play a key role in integration, as well as separate application design from the underlying legacy code.

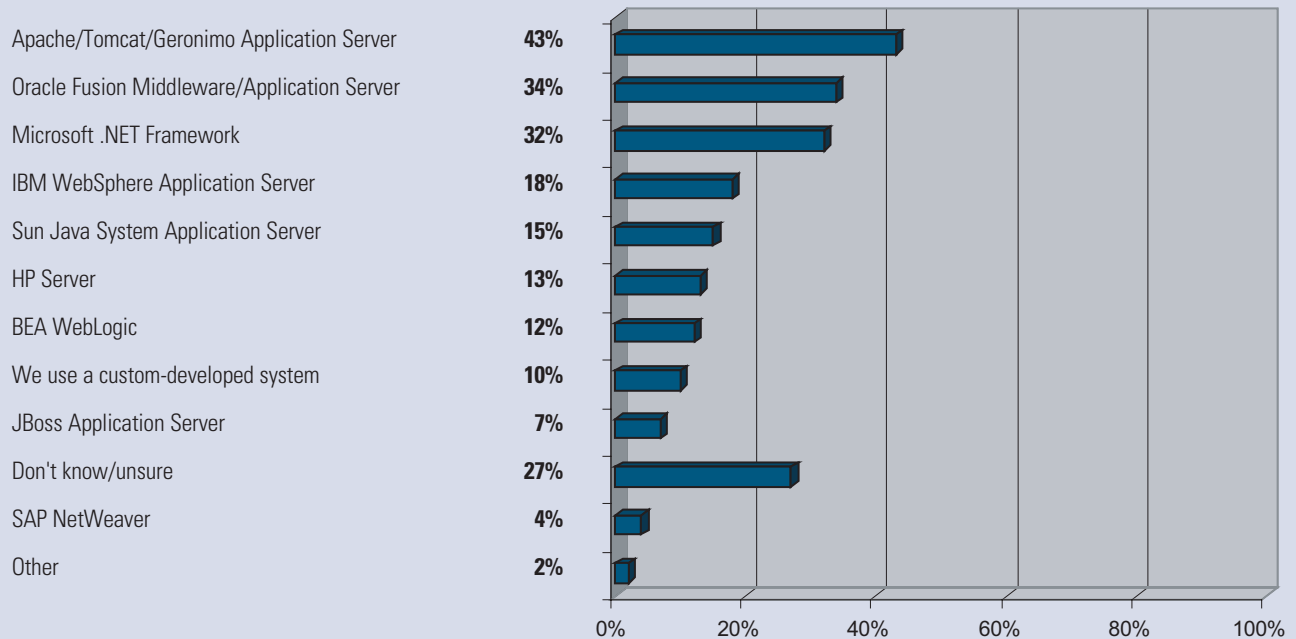
Application servers are considered a key SOA-based integration strategy, one that is actively promoted by Oracle and other infrastructure vendors. In addition, Oracle is also actively engaging integration efforts through Business Process Execution Language (BPEL), as well as its emerging Application Integration Architecture (AIA).

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The largest segment of respondents turn to an open source application server platform - Apache - to address their middleware requirements. Just over a third of respondents are employing parts of the emerging Oracle Fusion Middleware or Oracle Application Server within their infrastructure. Another third are also using Microsoft's .NET Framework within their organizations. (See Figure 12.)

FIGURE 12: Middleware and Application Server Environments



Digging deeper into the results, the heterogeneous nature of the software stack within today's Oracle enterprises becomes apparent. Close to half of the respondents using Oracle middleware, 48 percent, also use the Apache platform, and about 42 percent use .NET Framework.

Oracle Fusion Middleware is a portfolio of standards-based software products, produced by Oracle, intended to help customers move to service-oriented architecture. Oracle Fusion Middleware is essentially an umbrella term for many of Oracle's products outside of their core database and applications software offerings, including its Enterprise Application Server, BPEL Process Manager, Data Integrator, Integration B2B, Enterprise Connectivity Adapters, JDeveloper, and Enterprise Manager 10g.

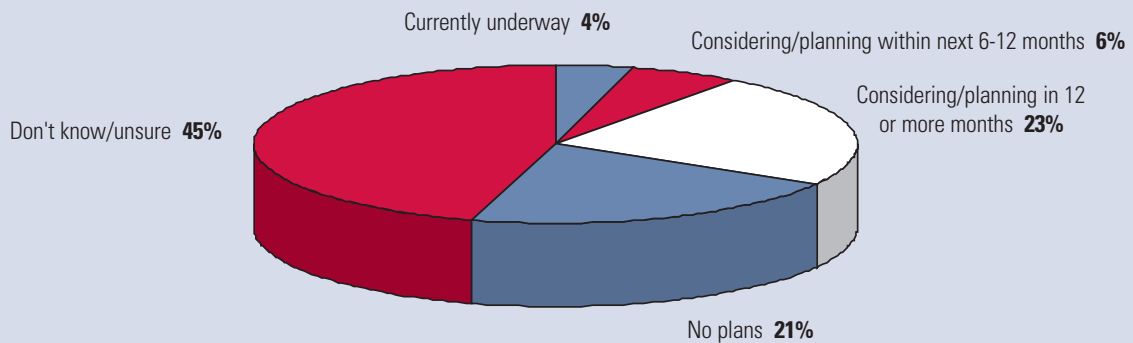
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When looking at specific plans for Oracle Fusion Middleware, it appears uptake will be slow and gradual. Only about 10 percent of respondents who are currently not running Oracle middleware said they either are currently deploying or plan to deploy Oracle middleware over the coming year. Two-thirds said they either have no plans for Oracle middleware or don't know if they will be using these solutions. (See Figure 13.)

FIGURE 13: Plans for Oracle Fusion Middleware/Oracle Application Server

(Among respondents not already running Oracle middleware)



Though respondents in more highly diverse application environments (managing processes spanning multiple application sets) would be more likely prospects to embrace Fusion, there appears to be little distinction in plans at this time. Thirteen percent of respondents managing highly diverse settings are moving toward Fusion over the next 12 months, versus 11 percent of those with most processes running in Oracle E-Business applications. (See Figure 14.)

FIGURE 14: Plans for Oracle Fusion Middleware/Oracle Application Server - By Diversity of Application Environments

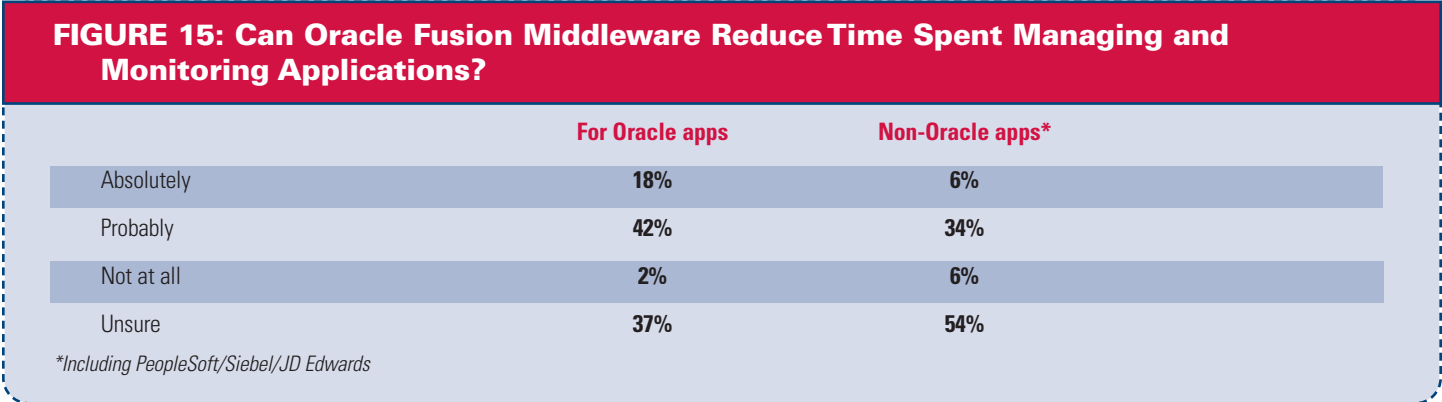
(Among respondents not already running Oracle middleware)

	Highly diverse environments	Low-diversity environments
Currently underway	2%	8%
Considering/planning within next 6-12 months	11%	3%
Considering/planning in 12 or more months	22%	27%
No plans	22%	22%
Don't know/unsure	42%	40%

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Oracle Fusion’s impact as an integration platform is much more likely to be felt within the Oracle E-Business space, versus other applications. Survey respondents were asked for their opinion on the efficacy of Oracle Fusion in helping to manage and monitor both Oracle E-Business and non-Oracle applications. Overall, 60 percent expressed at least some confidence that Fusion can help manage Oracle E-Business. However, the percentage seeing Fusion helping to manage non-Oracle apps (including PeopleSoft, Siebel, or JDEdwards) slips to 40 percent in total, with only six percent saying they "absolutely" believe Fusion can handle these environments. (See Figure 15.)

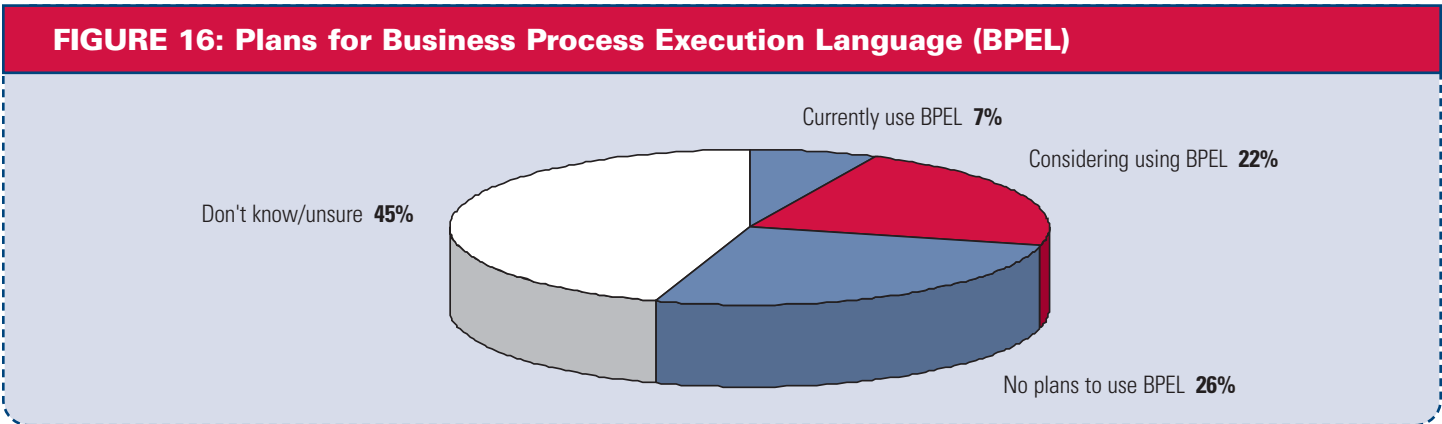


However, not all survey respondents buy in to the Oracle Fusion vision. One respondent believes, for example, that "using Fusion middleware to integrate new acquisitions instead of integrating into Oracle applications is a step backwards," citing the "added complexity of managing the Fusion layer." The respondent feels that "there are also unwanted additional technology and hardware costs associated with Fusion middleware."

BPEL

Survey respondents were asked about their plans for deploying Business Process Execution Language (BPEL) as the glue from which they can manage diverse IT and application portfolios. BPEL is a scripting language that enables the linking and orchestration of Web services across disparate systems.

Currently, only about seven percent of respondents actively employ BPEL at their sites, with an additional 22 percent considering using the standard. The large majority of respondents, 71 percent, either has no plans or do not know if they will be adopting BPEL anytime in the future. (See Figure 16.)



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Respondents in more highly diverse application environments (managing processes spanning multiple application sets) are more likely to be interested in embracing BPEL, the survey found. Thirty-four percent of respondents managing highly diverse settings are moving toward BPEL over the next 12 months, versus 23 percent of those with most processes running in Oracle E-Business applications. (See Figure 17.)

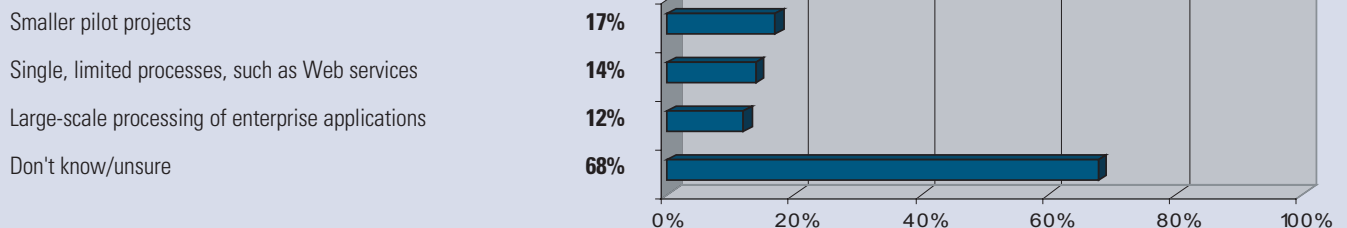
FIGURE 17: Plans for Business Process Execution Language (BPEL) - By Diversity of Application Environments

	Highly diverse environments	Low-diversity environments
Currently use BPEL	12%	3%
Considering using BPEL	22%	20%
No plans to use BPEL	18%	33%
Don't know/unsure	48%	44%

Among respondents currently using or considering BPEL, the majority simply do not know yet to what extent BPEL will be employed within their application environment. About 17 percent said they expect BPEL to be confined to smaller pilot projects for now, while 14 percent see its role remaining strictly with Web services. About 12 percent believe that BPEL will play a role in large-scale processing, such as enterprise applications formerly handled in batch. (See Figure 18.)

FIGURE 18: Level of Processing BPEL Is or Will Be Addressing

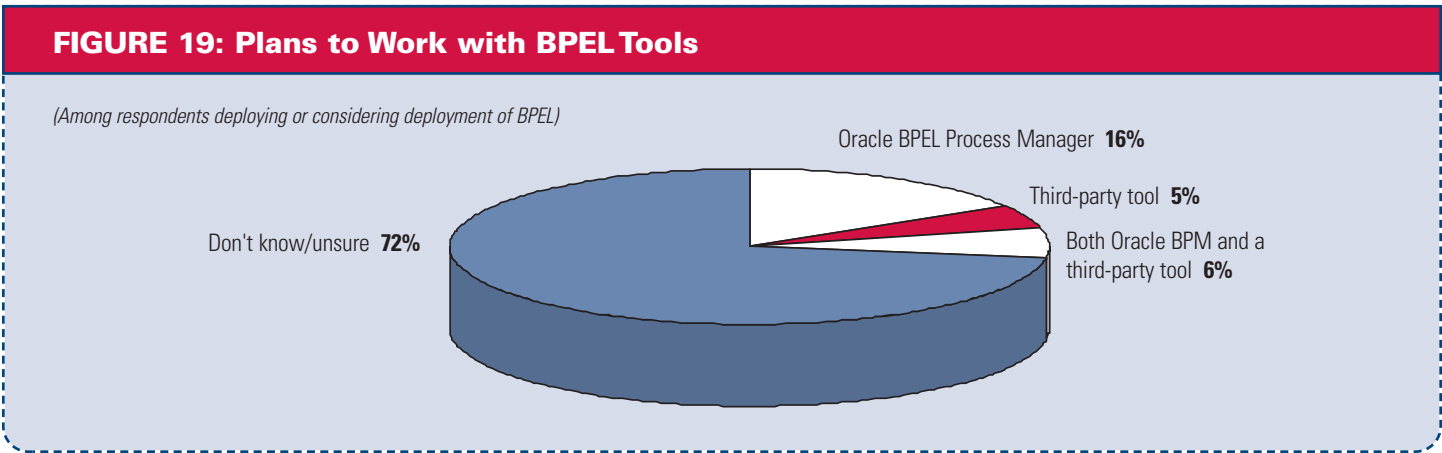
(Among respondents deploying or considering deployment of BPEL)



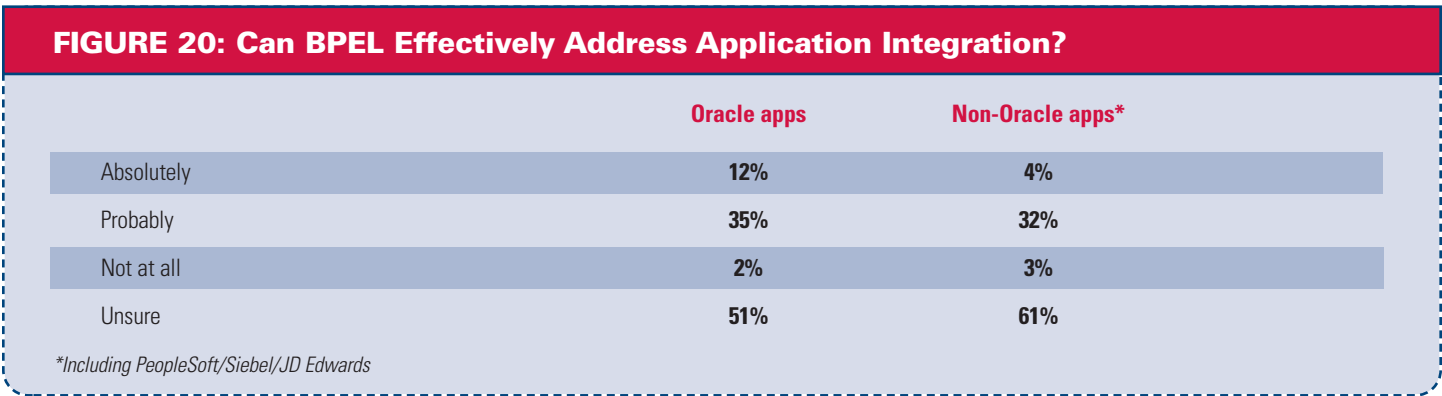
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A large majority of respondents working with or considering BPEL are unsure whether they will be adopting Oracle's BPEL Process Manager, or work with another third-party tool. About 16 percent expect to be working with Oracle BPEL Manager, and six percent said they will adopt a third-party tool. (See Figure 19.)



While adoption plans are low, BPEL does have potential. Overall, close to half of the survey respondents (whether they are considering BPEL or not) said BPEL can play a key role in helping to address integration within Oracle E-Business application portfolios. About 36 percent see a role for BPEL in managing more diverse application portfolios that involve non-Oracle applications. (See Figure 20.)

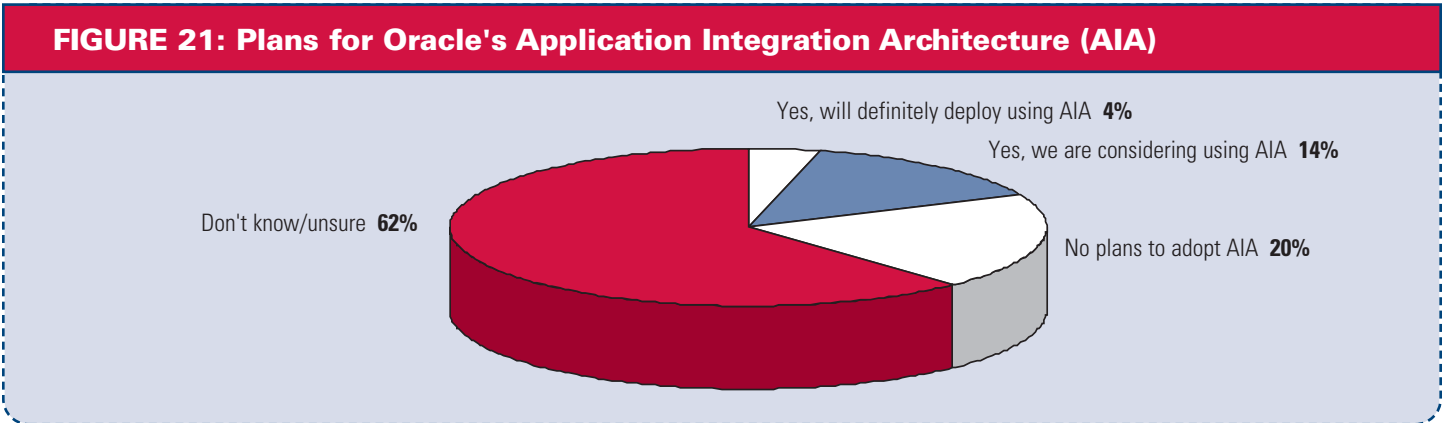


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AIA

About 18 percent of the survey respondents said they are considering deploying Oracle's Application Integration Architecture (AIA) integration packs as they become available. However, a vast majority of the survey group, 82 percent, said they either have no plans for AIA or are unsure if they will deploy it in the future. (See Figure 21.)



AIA is a framework in which the functionality of Oracle's diverse application portfolio - including Oracle E-Business, PeopleSoft, Siebel, and JD Edwards - can be configured to enterprise needs. To jump-start this, Oracle plans to create a series of Process Integration Packs (PIPs), which are pre-built workflows that embody enterprise business processes. Oracle has PIPs available that integrate Siebel CRM with the Oracle E-Business Suite.

Respondents in more highly diverse application environments (managing processes spanning multiple application sets) are more likely to be interested in embracing AIA, but not by a wide margin, the survey found. Twenty-two percent of respondents managing highly diverse settings are the most enthused about AIA, versus 16 percent of those with most processes running in Oracle E-Business applications. (See Figure 22.)

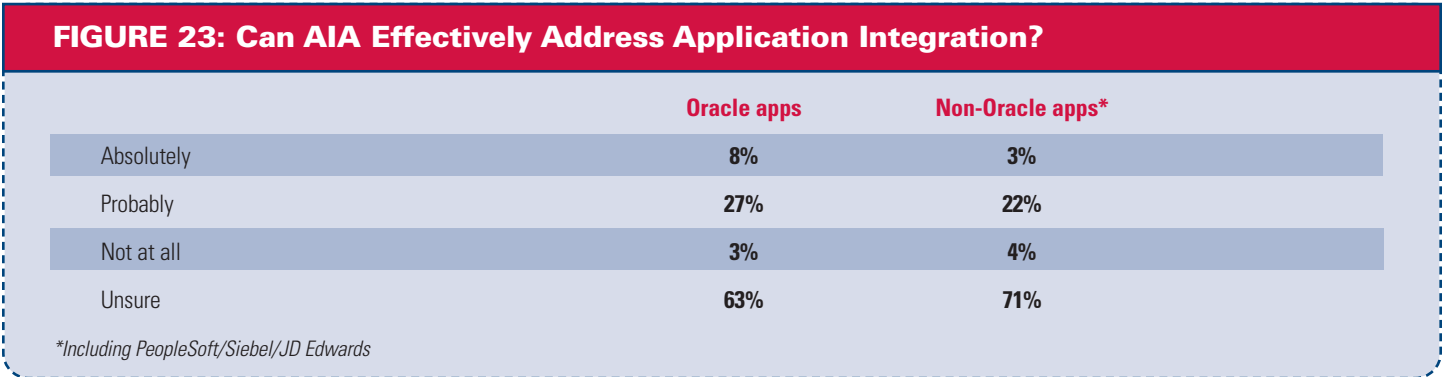
FIGURE 22: Plans for Oracle's Application Integration Architecture (AIA) - By Diversity of Application Environments

	Highly diverse environments	Low-diversity environments
Yes, will definitely deploy using AIA	6%	2%
Yes, we are considering using AIA	16%	14%
No plans to adopt AIA	19%	24%
Don't know/unsure	59%	60%

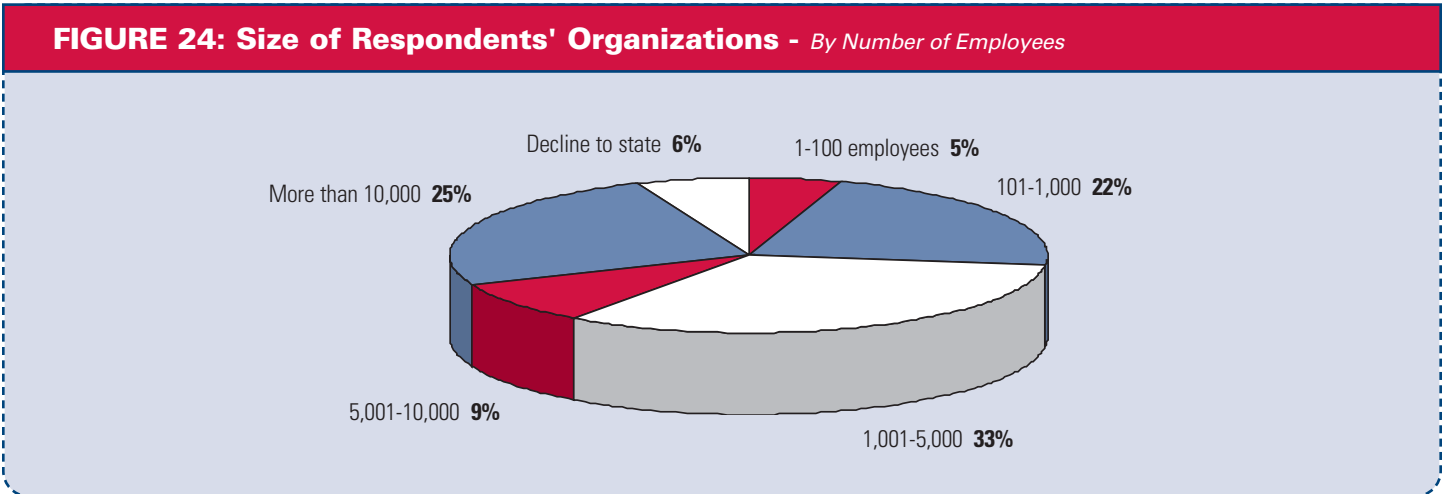
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About a third of the respondents see potential for AIA in helping to address integration needs. At least 35 percent said AIA will help in this area for Oracle E-Business application sets. Fewer, however (25%), see potential for AIA in addressing integration with non-Oracle applications. (See Figure 23.)



DEMOGRAPHICS



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FIGURE 25: Size of Respondents' Organizations - By Annual Revenues

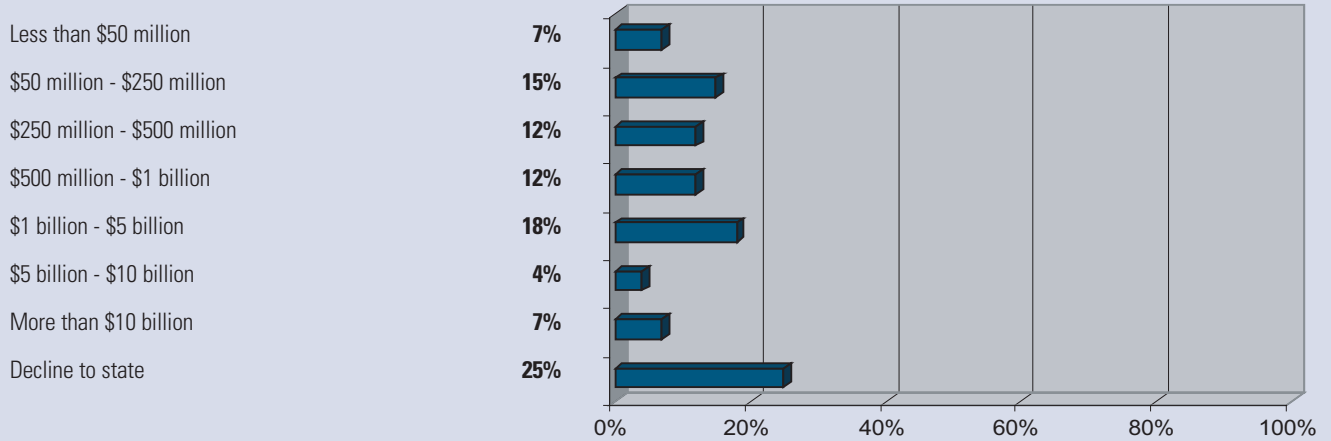
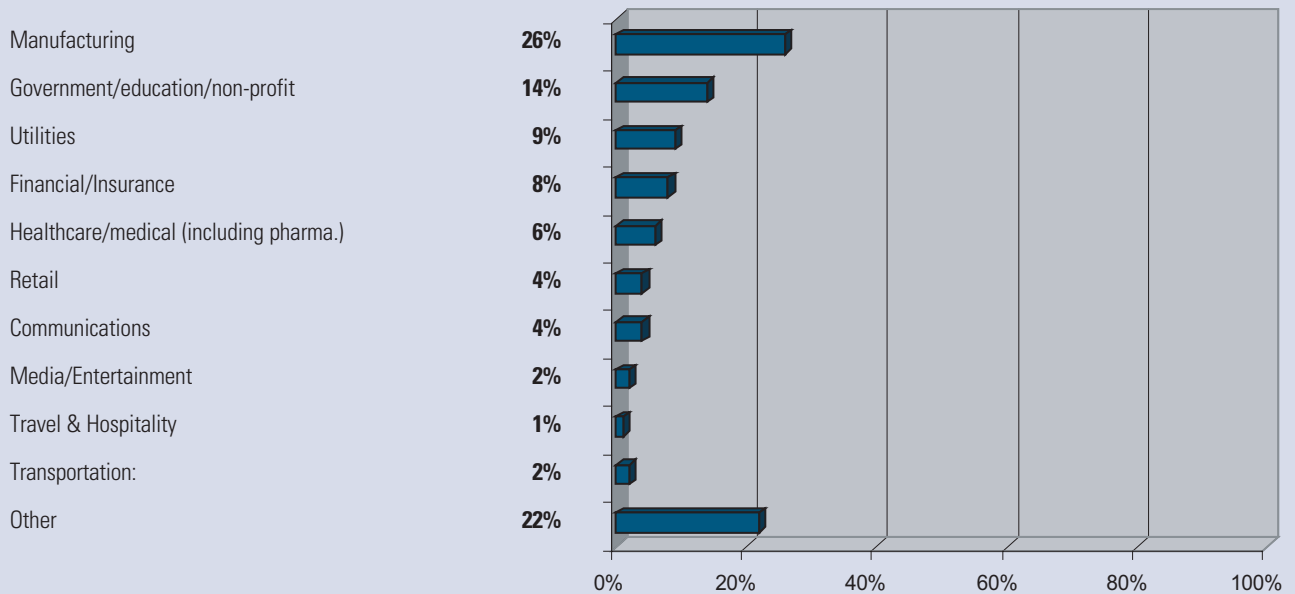


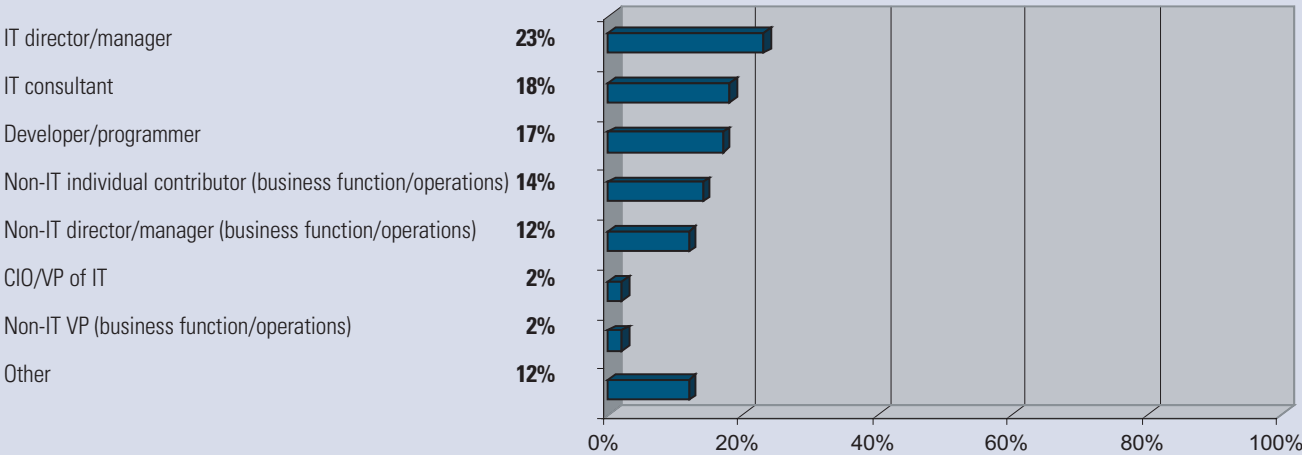
FIGURE 26: Primary Industries



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FIGURE 27: Respondents' Job Roles



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Data collection and analysis performed with SurveyMethods

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