

IBM Podcast

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MATHENY: Welcome to this IBM podcast, IBM Rational Automation Framework for WebSphere. I'm Angelique Matheny with IBM. Today, companies face complex WebSphere infrastructure management challenges. The key to delivering greater operational productivity with quality lies in automation.

Joining us today is Leigh Williamson, IBM Distinguished Engineer, Rational Architecture and Development. Leigh will answer questions about the new Rational Automation Framework for WebSphere, an optional feature that extends the Rational Build Forge solution and is designed specifically for automating application deployments for WebSphere Application Server and Lotus WebSphere Portal environments. Hi, Leigh, welcome to the podcast, thanks for joining us.

WILLIAMSON: Hi, thanks very much. A pleasure to be here today.

MATHENY: Let's just jump right in. Leigh, can you briefly explain what the new Rational Automation Framework for WebSphere actually is?

WILLIAMSON: Sure. We worked with an award-winning business

partner, Ascendant Technology, to take a framework that they developed over several years of WebSphere and Portal services engagements and to turn that framework into an IBM software product. This is backed by IBM development and support, and it contains over 450 field-tested automated tasks for WebSphere and Portal administration.

When combined with the general automation server capabilities of Build Forge, we think that this is an extremely valuable offering for our WebSphere and Portal customers to help reduce their administrative overhead and make their staff more productive.

MATHENY: And does anyone else have an offering like this for WebSphere Application Server and Lotus WebSphere Portal environments?

WILLIAMSON: No, actually this is a unique offering. It combines a huge library of field-proven functions, with an easy to customize framework so customers can continue to use the custom scripts they may have already invested in, but they get the additional benefit of this large legacy of automated administrative functions that we're productizing now.

MATHENY: Okay. We know what it is. So what are the top five benefits a WebSphere user can expect by implementing

the solution? In other words, why should we care?

WILLIAMSON: Well, by using the solution to eliminate manual and complex tasks related to managing your WebSphere environments and your Portal environments, the solution helps improve your staff productivity so you can do more with fewer people.

It allows you to cut costs, because it allows these administrative tasks to be accomplished in a shorter amount of time. And very importantly, it improves the quality and consistency of the WebSphere and Portal deployments and it includes the ability to audit the activity and provide traceability for the actions.

So there's many use cases for how to exploit the framework.

In fact, a number of customers have been very innovative in coming up with ways to get additional value from the framework.

As an example, there's a use case we call detecting and handling configuration drift. And this is a popular scenario where you can regularly check that the configuration of your WebSphere and Portal environments match what you expect it to be.

And you can take action to ensure that it remains as you

expect it rather than have various activity throughout the lifecycle alter the configuration without you realizing it.

Release to release migrations are also made easier using the framework, because you can extract the configuration from an older release of WebSphere or Portal and reapply that extracted configuration against a newer product release.

Another example is a full clustered Portal cell build out. This is a very complex environment to be built-out across multiple machines, and we've proven that we can reduce the amount of time that it takes for the full clustered Portal build-out from days and even weeks to something more on the order of about four hours.

So you can see the return on investment that that alone, that scenario alone, offers a huge value. It really boils down to making your WebSphere and Portal staff more productive and getting your environments under control. That's really the key value delivered here.

MATHENY: And are our customers using this now? And what kind of results are they seeing?

WILLIAMSON: Yes, actually the framework's been in the field for over five years as a service asset, and there are dozens of existing customers who have already received substantial

return on their investment in the framework.

These are customers in a wide range of industries, including banking, and finance, and airline, healthcare, and several other areas of the IT industry. And the payback is extremely fast. This is one of the highest ROI that I've seen in my career, way less than a year. Some studies have shown a complete ROI in as little as 90 days.

So for customers who have taken the time to participate in one of our proof of concepts, we almost always find that they won't let us take the product away at the end of the POC. The results and the value are that obvious immediately. So it's been very, very successful, and we're looking forward to a great future for RAFW.

MATHENY: Leigh, thanks so much for sharing your time today to discuss IBM Rational Automation Framework for WebSphere. This was very informative, and we really appreciate it.

WILLIAMSON: My pleasure, indeed. And I hope to speak with you again soon.

MATHENY: That was IBM's Leigh Williamson, IBM Distinguished Engineer, Rational Architecture and Development. If you're interested in more podcasts like this one, check out the

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