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IBM Podcast

MATHENY: Welcome to this IBM podcast. Hot off the Press, All New Rational Automation Framework and Rational Build Forge. I'm Angelique Matheny with IBM.

Rational Software Delivery Automation solutions have led the market in helping software delivery teams streamline their builds and manage the configuration and deployment of applications to target middleware solutions.

And in today's podcast, we'll discover what's new in the all new Rational Automation Framework solution with new pricing and packaging and a host of new features, while Rational Build Forge marches on with a new release and significant enhancements.

And joining us today is Elissa Redmiles, Rational Software delivery automation development; and, Jesse Alva, a team lead for Rational Automation Framework Level 3 support, both with IBM Rational. Hi, Elissa. Hi, Jesse. Welcome to the podcast. Thanks for joining us.

REDMILES: Thank you.

MATHENY: Elissa, I'm going to start with you. What's the new news for the software delivery automation solutions from IBM?

REDMILES: So, we just released Build Forge Version 713, which has support for new platforms and all new dashboard, new user typing and some enhanced features for account lockout, logging and systems messages and audit logging.

And we also added some integration documentation for our Rational ClearCase, ClearQuest and Rational Team Concert. Finally, we also have a brand-new Agent Update utility that has never been released with the product before.

ALVA: And the new news from the Rational Automation Framework side is that we are now our own product and can be purchased separately from Build Forge. So we're no longer a component.

Part of that is, if you guys remember previously we used to be called Rational Automation Framework for WebSphere. We dropped the "for WebSphere" from our name, so we'll now be known as Rational Automation Framework. So that's how you're going to have to be able to find us going forward on Fix Central and all the other awesome IBM Web pages.

Part of our new release, we've also added a new

Eclipse-based client to allow you to manage your Rational Automation Framework environment from your desktop instead of the framework server. We've also added some support for existing WebSphere products into our environment generation wizard. We've also added some security features and support for WebSphere feature packs.

MATHENY: Well, that's some exciting news. So Jesse, while I've got you, what are the challenges that these products resolve and what are some of the scenarios where these automation products can help?

ALVA: With the new Rational Automation Framework, we allow you to automate the maintenance supported middleware products like WebSphere application server. This helps you reduce the amount of time needed to roll out new environments and also to make or compare changes to existing environments, all from a centralized location. The scenario that we hope to solve with this product is to identify and fix configuration drift. This is a common problem that causes big headaches for administrators.

The Rational Automation Framework also allows you to do centralized administration for your WebSphere cells, and we also help to simplify promoting changes from your test or dev environment into your production environment.

We also allow you to keep your environment secure when you're making all these administrative changes. And we also help to reduce the complexity when pushing your configuration changes across large cells that can be time consuming and tedious.

Rational Automation Framework also helps to improve the repeatability of configuration changes by standardizing the scripting that's used across all of the products that we support. All of these IBM practices are baked right into our product.

REDMILES: Okay. And on the Build Forge, the challenges that Rational Build Forge can help resolve is if you need to have automated build and deployment for a software product or a Web site, Rational Build Forge can help you schedule that, build it, all automatically without much input from the user.

And as far as possible scenarios, you can use Build Forge to allow everyone from your administrators down to your developers to view what's going on but not necessarily be able to modify it; and also, be able to input their own projects on different computers and use fewer licenses by just deploying agents across computers as opposed to having to have the Build Forge machine every time.

MATHENY: So, Elissa, how do the features that you just described help with the above scenarios?

REDMILES: Okay. So with our brand new dashboard, you can see widgets showing job success, schedules, service dates, job and [print] SKUs and the number of licenses you're using. So this is an easy, quick view for your administrators and users to see what they're doing and what's going on and the status of their projects without necessarily needing to modify anything.

And then we have new user typing with normal, read-only, and API users. And the normal users are the same as they've always been, but read-only users now allow you a simpler method than the old method of creating access groups to control permissions. You can just set it for read-only and use this for your managers, administrators, project managers, anything like that and they won't be able to modify.

And then finally, our API users have API client access, but they can't log in to the UI, so they don't consume multiple licenses. This will allow you to run scripts using the same access tokens and you can't log into the UI, so no one will get bumped out.

And then we have new account lockout features, which is just

a security feature that will prevent brute force hacking into Build Forge and then with our audit logging and new logging and system messages, we've reduced the spam-like or difficult to understand messages that used to be added to logs so they're now very easy to read.

And then for audit logging, if you have a build that's been running and working for the past three months, this is your most important build, and then all of a sudden on Monday morning it's broken, you can use our audit logs to go in and check what's happened and see who modified what and who broke the build.

Then finally, our integration documentation will help you use ClearCase, ClearQuest and Rational Team Concert, which is very important because we have a lot of customers who want to integrate with these IBM softwares.

And then Agent Update is a new feature which will allow you to update and deploy multiple agents simultaneously on your different computers very easily just by running a simple command line command.

ALVA:                   And on the Rational Automation Framework side, let's start with security. We've added a new Sudo functionality that allows you to communicate between your framework server and your target server using a non-root

user, which you can then use Sudo to manage all of your systems on the target server as root or any other user that you'd prefer and you wouldn't want things like passwords or user names kind of lying around on the file system. So that's a big one for us there.

And also, with the new Eclipse client, we offer a nice GUI interface in order to help manage your systems without actually having to be on the framework server itself. So now your different WebSphere administrators can log in from their desktop on to the framework server and the Rational Automation Framework administrators can decide who has access to which environment that they can manage. And so we essentially decouple different administrators from the different environments so that they can only see the things that they should be able to see.

Also, in the environment generation wizard, we're now supporting WebSphere Virtual Enterprise, Virtual Process Server and WebSphere Enterprise Service Bus. These new products can now easily be imported into the Rational Automation Framework as an environment and more easily managed. Those have reduced the amount of time that it previously took for customers to import these environments so that they could manage them through Rational Automation Framework.

With those enhancements, we're also able to along with the new Eclipse client, give a nice GUI comparison tool so that you can view the differences between those and find where your configuration drift is occurring. That's one big problem that haunts almost every single administrator everywhere when they are not the only ones that are accessing these systems.

On the flip side, being a new product, we also have our own installation manager install, which is very similar to what you experienced beforehand with Build Forge. The only difference is that now, we support the [v Linux] platform with installation managers. And there is migration also involved there that we can use to bring in your existing environment into the new Rational Automation Framework product.

Also, with a new client, creating automation plans is now simpler and more robust and you can edit, run and view the job resolves from the new client without ever having to access the web UI of the Build Forge install.

MATHENY: Wow. Lots of great new features. I know everyone will be really excited. So Elissa and Jesse, thank you so much for sharing your time today. Great update and we really appreciate it.

REDMILES: Thank you.

ALVA: Thank you.

MATHENY: That was Rational's Elissa Redmiles and Jesse Alva, discussing the all new Rational Automation Framework and the new release of Rational Build Forge. Streamline devops and simplify your build and deploy.

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We'll post a link to an analyst study by Hurwitz and Associates titled, Demonstrated Benefits of Software Delivery Automation. Check it out today to help you get started. This has been an IBM podcast. I'm Angelique Matheny. Thanks for listening. Keep tuning in as Rational Talks To You.

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