

Embarcadero Announces ToolCloud: Centrally Managed, On-Demand Tools Deployment

Abstract

In February of 2010, Embarcadero Technologies announced the availability of a new deployment methodology, ToolCloud. ToolCloud centrally manages and provisions Embarcadero tools and adds on-demand delivery capability to Embarcadero's current product installation methodology, giving Embarcadero customers an additional deployment option.

ToolCloud delivers encapsulated applications from a server on an organization's internal network via a "pull" model. In addition to simplifying the deployment process on the user side, it also centrally manages tool licenses and versioning, reducing the complexities associated with PC software administration.

Embarcadero's ToolCloud is an innovative use of a specific type of application virtualization which has been available for several years but has gone virtually unnoticed by other Independent Software Vendors (ISVs)¹. Combined with delivery and licensing enhancements announced in 2009, this offers multiple benefits to Embarcadero customers.

This ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) Impact Brief describes ToolCloud and its value proposition in more detail. It also highlights the advantages of Embarcadero's licensing and deployment methodologies and provides a snapshot analysis of application virtualization and its impact on business consumers.

Embarcadero Announces ToolCloud

On February 16, 2010, Embarcadero Technologies (www.embarcadero.com) announced the availability of ToolCloud. This is an innovative approach to product deployment and administration which utilizes application virtualization technology to deliver Embarcadero products from an on-premise deployment Cloud. This new deployment option delivers InstantOn rich client packages to user desktops. ToolCloud supplements Embarcadero's existing software deployment methodologies, giving Embarcadero customers an additional deployment option.

ToolCloud delivers multiple advantages. One major benefit is the fact that the encapsulated executable packages delivered via ToolCloud cannot disrupt other applications already running on the PC. Developers can run multiple versions of Embarcadero tools side-by-side, and maintain complete control over their toolkits. In addition to giving users the freedom to select their own products and versions, this "no touch" deployment methodology frees up technical support personnel from physically installing new tools and versions to individual desktops. Within minutes of installing ToolCloud, users can download the small footprint toolbox, click on the requested product, and launch it immediately.

¹ "Application Virtualization" is defined in a variety of ways depending on the vendor. However, EMA identified a broad taxonomy of virtualization technologies in a White Paper entitled, "Virtualization and Management: Trends, Forecasts, and Recommendations," available at www.emausa.com. In the EMA taxonomy, the type of application virtualization most similar to that leveraged by ToolCloud (which EMA calls "Application Isolation"), can be described as follows: "A method of installing and/or executing application software on a local desktop in a way that it does not interact with other system and application components, settings, and configurations on that desktop. Typically, isolated applications do not use the same system environment settings and locations – Windows registry, Dynamic Link Library (DLL) folders, etc. – so while they appear to run as a standard application in the end user environment, they are effectively separated from the rest of the environment, and run in their own 'sandbox'."

The overriding benefit delivered by ToolCloud is simplification-- simplified deployment, license management, and version control. All users and licenses can be administered centrally, and deployments can be centrally audited for compliance purposes. ToolCloud works in any standard desktop environment, both physical and virtual, including Citrix Desktop Virtualization environments and non-Citrix environments. It will be made available to all customers across all products at the time of the announcement.

Company and Product Background

Embarcadero is an Independent Software Vendor (ISV) focused on multi-platform database and development tool sets. Initially addressing the Database Administration (DBA) and database development markets, Embarcadero announced plans for acquiring Borland's CodeGear™ unit in May of 2008. With that acquisition, Embarcadero broadened its reach to better address both pre-deployment and runtime tool sets.

The February 2010 announcement is in response to customer requests, and builds on Embarcadero's 2009 Research and Development (R&D) strength. In February of 2009, Embarcadero announced All-Access™, a new licensing model giving potential customers the option to purchase single-user licenses with access to all products across the Embarcadero line. This was followed in November of 2009 when ToolCloud became available as an à-la-carte option for select customers, giving users instant access to any separately-purchased Embarcadero product.

ToolCloud is a “better way” to address multiple software administration challenges including:

- License allocation: Better control over tools access and redeployment
- Reporting: Out-of-the-box reports on usage, licenses, users
- Provisioning: Centralized tool delivery on demand
- Tracking: Usage tracking by user and products.

Embarcadero solved these challenges with an innovative distribution model based on leading-edge provisioning technology.

Centralized License Management

At the core of ToolCloud is centralized license management. Embarcadero has had license management incorporated into its products for a number of years, and is one of the few tool vendors to have broadly addressed this challenge across its entire portfolio.

Centralized license management enables complete control over who can access the tools, and who cannot, and makes it easy to reallocate licenses and track compliance. This standardizes and simplifies tools management and provides for centralized administration of all Embarcadero licenses. It also guarantees compliance by enforcing licensing policies centrally.

License tracking and reporting automatically deliver information regarding usage by user, products, and groups, providing another way to ultimately save on license purchases.

Software Management, Application Virtualization, and Application Isolation

Application virtualization is one of the least familiar technologies in the virtualization family. Relatively few vendors, notably Symantec, Citrix, Microsoft (with its SoftGrid technology), and VMware (with ThinApp) offer such capabilities. According to EMA research, “Application virtualization abstracts the

physical characteristics of computing resources from the way in which other systems, applications, or end-users interact with those resources².”

With the type of application virtualization leveraged in ToolCloud, (from EMA research), “software packages are not installed to the desktop like traditional software applications; instead, they are installed in virtual layers, each of which exists in its own isolated portion of the file system. As the application runs, these virtual layers sit above the desktop. The user sees a normal desktop and applications look and act normally... Since each software package runs in its own layer, new software installations never interfere with existing ones, multiple versions of the same software can coexist on the same desktop, and integration testing is virtually eliminated. Deployment of applications is almost instantaneous, as is removal³.”

Embarcadero’s ToolCloud is an innovative use of this technology, which to date has gone virtually unnoticed by other ISVs. Embarcadero’s rich-client-based products are ideal candidates for application virtualization, and ToolCloud offers multiple benefits to Embarcadero customers.

Value Proposition

This new deployment model offers a variety of benefits and solves some of the biggest software administration challenges. It benefits Embarcadero customers in a number of ways:

- Simplified license management
 - Easier license tracking
 - Licenses and users are tracked centrally versus conducting inventories of each individual PC
 - Moving licenses between people/machines/facilities is also centrally managed, and very efficient
 - License lifecycle information is available for later analysis
 - Optimized purchasing: license transparency prevents “over-buying”
 - Embarcadero’s All-Access licensing virtually removes the headaches associated with license management and auditing
- Simplified deployment
 - Software is deployed from a single location inside the firewall
 - No touch deployment means desktop support techs no longer have to install software on each individual pc
- Comprehensive and efficient auditing and compliance tracking
 - Compliance and audit information is automated and centralized
 - Complete control over who uses what tool, tool access
 - Multiple reporting options
- User convenience
 - Immediate, “on request” delivery
 - Users no longer have to wait for a tech to schedule an install. Pull technology delivers the application to the desktop immediately
 - No risk of lost productivity due to software incompatibilities

² “3 Key Phases to Implementing Desktop Virtualization”

³ “Altiris Paves the Way for the Virtual Desktop”

- After the initial installation, tools are available for up to 30 days whether or not the user is network-attached
- Multiple tools and versions available on request and can coexist on the desktop
- Minimal time lag between the vendor release of new tools and versions and their availability to users
- Reduced administration costs
 - Less administrative overhead
 - Less integration testing required, as the technology prevents application conflicts
 - Streamlined software and version maintenance: Embarcadero software is maintained on a central server
 - Product updates can be automatically retrieved from Embarcadero

EMA Perspective

EMA has been tracking application virtualization for quite some time and has frankly been surprised that it has not caught on faster in the ISV community. In a world where IT costs continue to rise and budgets continue to fall, it makes sense to pare administration and support costs, particularly where it can be done without adverse impact to users or the business. Kudos to Embarcadero for doing the research and finding a better way to administer, govern, and deploy software.

It should also be stressed that technology alone cannot solve the entire problem. From this viewpoint, Embarcadero should also be recognized for the new All-Access and à-la-carte licensing. These new models have expanded the options for Embarcadero customers and prospects, and are a natural fit for deployment via ToolCloud.

Embarcadero is in the process of overcoming a somewhat bumpy road in its past evolution, which has led to some confusion across the investor, customer, and analyst communities. The company went public (in 2000), then private again (2007). It acquired Borland's CodeGear assets in 2008, leading many in the industry to scratch their heads to understand how this fit with Embarcadero's traditional focus on DBA tools.

Embarcadero has clarified its direction and messaging since becoming a private company, and it is clear the company has a plan for enhancing product value and is aggressively pursuing that plan. Today, the company prides itself on its positioning at "at both the union and intersection of application and database," with tools addressing the gamut of challenges including data management, database platform management, performance optimization, and application development. Embarcadero is now positioned with a vendor- and technology- independent toolset and is leveraging this new direction to become more efficient as an organization. Both earnings and revenue reflect this evolution.

The events of the past three years have effectively strengthened Embarcadero's value proposition. This is a vendor with a broad set of diverse tools, which can be a particularly good choice for companies seeking to reduce purchasing administration costs with a small set of preferred vendors. EMA recommends that companies seeking database and development management solutions take another look at Embarcadero.

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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