

Critical Capabilities for Composite Content Applications: Case Management

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The emerging composite content application (CCA) market (see Note 2) includes a number of competing vendors that deliver solutions built atop transactional content management, collaborative content management and business process management (BPM) software suites. This research introduces and analyzes the base configurations of several global enterprise content management (ECM) and BPM suite (BPMS) vendors that focus on solutions in case management, a subset of the broader CCA market. Solutions in case management focus mostly on constituent or customer-facing processes in key vertical markets: government, insurance, banking and healthcare. These offerings typically focus on the interests of line-of-business buyers, but CIOs, enterprise architects, business analysts and process architects are also often stakeholders.

Key Findings

- Case management frameworks and templates are growing in value for CCA buyers in many industries. Not all case management solutions target the same vertical, horizontal or geographic markets.
- Most software vendors lack business domain expertise. Partner ecosystems are very important critical criteria for a review of CCAs.
- Success measures in frameworks and solutions are still underdeveloped — though case studies and proof points are becoming more common.
- The best case management solutions today come from established ECM vendors, but newcomers — especially those complementing SharePoint — are gaining ground.

Recommendations

- ECM or BPMS buyers should consider issuing RFPs with an emphasis on near-term cost recovery and out-of-box functionality such as base configurations. Look for proof points, return on investment (ROI) calculations, benchmarks and best practices for emerging suite frameworks and templates such as case management.
- Because CCAs can provide great value if defined by domain experts, enterprises should ask for references from the vendor's service partners as well as the software vendor itself.
- Vendors should identify their specific vertical focus and add domain experts to their teams for development and support.

Introduction

Base configurations of key suite components for CCA solutions like case management are a logical progression of the ECM (and sometimes BPMS) value proposition. Understanding these components and the critical capabilities of solutions should help manage business buyers' expectations and improve outcomes. In time, the value of the suites will commonly be factored against the numbers of solutions that "plug and play" on them. Many ECM and BPMS vendors are also looking to become CCA platforms. This emerging solutions market favors larger vendors with established services provider partnerships, but the mix of critical capabilities is still confusing business strategists and CIOs. CCAs can deliver substantial value by leveraging both content and process services for the better orchestration of people and processes, as well as the substantial content required for specific domains. There is growing consensus, evidenced by industry analyst surveys and enterprise ROI analysis, that this should not happen through one-off custom code as in the past, but instead by taking advantage of repeatable knowledge gained over years of similar implementations by service providers — and sometimes by software vendors, too. The direct delivery of frameworks by the vendors and the leveraging of independent software vendor (ISV) domain experts as the primary focus of solutions development is bringing big changes — particularly to the ECM market.

Product Class Definition

The purpose of case management CCAs is to deliver faster value to businesses interested in optimizing the interfaces between people, processes and other applications that rely on substantial amounts of managed content over often substantial periods of time. Understanding what case management is should precede any search for the right solution. At the most elemental level, case management is the electronic equivalent of what has supported business over several centuries: the cabinets, drawers, folders, forms and collaborative workflow processes supporting important human decisions. Case management captures the backward-and-forward nature of human interaction to reach a specific outcome. Technology is now being forced to reflect this, rather than peoples' behavior being forced to fit into the technology/process paradigm. It is likely that a few other trends will help drive further interest in these solutions:

1. There will be increased access to electronic case files by customers, constituents, regulators, management and agents.
2. There will be an increase in the number of files and the number of file formats — including media — contained within a case folder.
3. The life cycle of any case is likely to be extended as electronic (and sometimes cloud-hosted) archives reduce the reliance on paper records (and offset their cost). The demand for life cycle extension is probable because storage cost and complexity will become less of a factor, electronic government oversight will become more of a factor, and the leverage of e-discovery and other analytics software will make it possible to find new meaning and value in older content.
4. The role of case owners/managers — and the duration of their direct involvement — will change as dashboards, business rules and policy automation evolve.
5. The componentization of content, the externalization of process models and business rules, and the understanding of end-user context in terms of roles, presence, location

and mobility will ultimately force the present case management cabinet-folder-document hierarchy and metadata model to become much more dynamic.

Suite vendors can improve the value of their software in three ways: 1) by ensuring that the components are exposed as callable services and work well with other applications in a service-oriented architecture (SOA); 2) by ensuring that the most valuable components can be quickly assembled together to address specific business problems for any buyers; and 3) that further expertise in specific domains — process models and logic, metadata, controls, interfaces, user experience, human-to-human interaction optimization and management insight — are delivered by reliable and available experts.

Vendors and their partners need to short-circuit any existing arguments against investing in ECM and BPMS because they take too long to implement, cost too much and lack success measures and other guarantees of positive business outcomes. Finally, the emerging solutions market depends on delivering not a custom one-off application but on prepackaged templates comprising 50% to 75% of the business logic and functionality that other businesses have already adopted, and whose vendors can affirm are a solid starting point toward ROI.

Critical Capabilities Definition

CCAs like case management can orchestrate a number of content contribution and consumption interfaces — between users, processes and other applications. Critical capabilities include some basics common to most vendors. Full life cycle control over substantial amounts of content with different file formats captured in different ways is a starting point and, considering the dynamic nature of content interactions and their frequent relevance to regulatory constraints, most of the solutions will have comprehensive content management and collaboration at their core. Linked to the repository and all of its related services should be a set of comprehensive process services and application interfaces that are nearly the equal of content management in terms of the overall solution's functional value. The interface to the user and the insight available for decision support by management are the next levels of value. And, ideally, the first CCA should establish a foundation for the further acquisition of extensible templates — not fixed solutions.

Many content management systems have supported case management by supporting the deliverables themselves with relationships, but they often fall short on process management and user interaction management. In other words, imaging, document management, collaboration, archive, records management and workflow automation are all necessary, but they are not sufficient for effective case workload management. Many of the ECM suite vendors with a focus on transactional content have commonly been used for case management configurations — among them Autonomy, Hyland Software, Laserfiche, Objective, Perceptive Software and Xerox — but few are directly marketing a case management foundation.

Many BPMS products do not support a case management workload well and lack the requisite capabilities to coordinate this more complex use case. Case management departs from the traditional view of structured and sequential predefined processes. Instead, workflows are nondeterministic, meaning that they have one or more points where different continuations are possible. They are driven more by human decision making and content status than by other factors.

Because the progression of work cannot be completely anticipated at design time, any solution needs to be able to accommodate more dynamic execution, in which decision and content state changes are used to trigger the workflow. Many BPMS tools only provide basic capabilities to support case management representations. Several, though, have a focus on case management, including Appian, Pallas Athena, Pegasystems and Singularity. These are not rated here as they do not focus as much on CCA. Other specialist vendors with a regional focus (such as cBrain of

Denmark) or a services-led industry solution set (CSC, for example) are not included as they offer neither frameworks nor platforms.

There are eight critical capabilities that can really help distinguish the right fit for enterprises based on how they intend to use the solutions. The critical capabilities for case management CCAs include:

- **Balanced content, collaboration and process services within an SOA framework.** ECM providers with BPMS offerings are better than other ECM or BPMS vendors for CCAs given their strengths in orchestrating people, collaborative processes and content. The gap, though, is shrinking fast. Both markets are also moving toward frameworks, templates and solutions to showcase business value "out of the box." Yet both markets still have few vendors that can balance their technology selling message with extended business value propositions delivered by CCAs. Connecting to any application and data source using standards-based SOA, using the right content and process components as callable services, delivering a compelling user experience (likely configured in a portal), and offering visualization and measurement to confirm the values promised by the success measures from earlier adopters, is a tall order for any vendor, regardless of heritage.
- **Integrates well with other critical content and process components (Content Management Interoperability Services [CMIS], portals, SharePoint, rule engines and mashups).** Every content architecture includes repositories and application interfaces that will not be provided by any one suite vendor. The attraction of specifications like CMIS (see Note 3) is that enterprises will have some comfort in knowing that someday newly purchased technology will require less custom code or adapters to connect to other systems. Another prospect for improvement is a better content client — likely to be a portal or rich Internet appliance or a browser-based mashup. Microsoft's SharePoint is on the way to ubiquity, and being able to work well with its users and their content is close to becoming an independent critical capability.
- **Intelligent and versatile on-ramps and off-ramps (document capture, optical character recognition, e-forms and composition).** It doesn't matter how the information exists — on paper, in a digital document, as an image, in an e-mail, in a voice mail, on the Web — case management will almost always require capture and control with as much upfront intelligence as possible. Often coupled with the ability to deliver various inbound content objects to a folder is the ability to generate outbound content — like reports or letters or statements — back to customers. Among the critical capabilities, intelligent capture as part of imaging processes is one aspect that buyers are currently focused on. The next big value proposition will be to convert from paper to e-forms.
- **Early focus on a core vertical or horizontal configuration via predefined case-specific data models, hierarchies and life cycles.** Some suite vendors have had substantial experience in specific configurations because their partners and their customers are specialists. Transferring the lessons learned from as much as a decade of consistent use cases and data definitions directly into the product's development and market messaging is a big step that several vendors are taking. Often, these early configurations are derived from directly supporting customer implementations. Sometimes, though, they are developed by service partners — whether system integrators (SIs) or ISVs — that will "own" the solution while being certified to the vendor-provided framework. Regulatory considerations like compliance and overall content governance become qualifying factors here.

- **Application interfaces to CRM, ERP, supply chain management (SCM), legacy and Web data.** Some ECM and BPMS suite vendors are certified partners of one particular ERP, CRM or other business application. Most are able to support standards-based integrations with other applications via Web services, enterprise service buses, and so on. Some, though, have ownership stakes in a number of applications, and have a natural advantage when it comes to interoperability — even if that advantage is not always leveraged.
- **Comprehensive and highly configurable case-based user interface.** Every manager wants to limit the amount of training, support and change management required to move people into a new application. Moreover, experience suggests that acceptance is also a critical step toward overall productivity gain. Idealizing the interface between case workers, the content in cases and the managers who make decisions based on the work in progress is a crucial factor in building a better solution. A marriage of content, collaboration, processes and application data, as well as dashboards and other analytics, can happen in a browser, a portal, a rich Internet appliance or a mashup. It is likely that portals are the near-term top prospect. Vendors with portals have an advantage in building a better client for CCAs. Several others are considering SharePoint as a prospective replacement for their own proprietary interfaces.
- **Business-user-friendly dashboards, models, policies, rules and reporting.** The one factor cited by many business buyers as a decision driver for selecting one solution over another is the least amount of technology skill required for managing it, modifying it and getting meaningful information from it. Perhaps as much as end-user satisfaction, business owner satisfaction is a success measure that unfailingly determines a vendor's prospects as a CCA provider. Meaningful feedback, as well as simple administrative controls, sells systems to managers.
- **Mature, certified and sustainable partner ecosystem (support for case templates from third-party domain experts and logo programs).** Most vendors agree that their own domain expertise in building case management solutions is limited — they either need input from their own customers or instead must let third parties define and deliver solutions atop vendor-developed frameworks. Registering and certifying a number of stable solution providers requires an alliance program that builds confidence in the technology and a marketing and/or channel program that builds a similar degree of confidence in buyers. The platform has to have value that is independent of the solution, but the marriage of the two must not emphasize one to the detriment of the other. Business buyers up to this point are most concerned with proven ROI and don't always have a strategic platform in mind when they buy software for case management. Ultimately, the value of CCAs will be made clearer by measuring multiple gains over time through solution adoption. Like the iPhone, the best suites can become a plug-and-play platform for delivering many applications that fit natively with the infrastructure and engage end users. Apart from services, suite vendors will seek technology partners to supplement either missing or weak components.

Use Cases

Look for case-management-focused CCAs in the following areas (the weightings for each critical capability against these use cases are given in Table 1):

- **Collaborative forms-based case management (HR, new retail bank accounts, tax filings).** Although paper forms are still a common starting point for many horizontal and vertical processes, the intelligence of the system's data capture capability, from any source in any format, can make a huge difference in terms of data quality, process

efficiency and overall cost. Solutions that help reduce end-user support by making any information gathering process fit their work style better are highly desirable. Interfaces to e-mail, ERP and line-of-business applications are critical as sources or targets of content or triggers for decisions.

- **Knowledge workers collaborating on internal content (pharma, legal, engineering and auditing sectors).** The highest-value people working on the highest-value content in the highest-value processes could mean a substantial increase in value if interfaces are optimized. The optimal balance between collaboration, content, process and portal resources has to be maintained, even as access to other information repositories, search tools and analytics is added.
- **Regulated customer-facing file folders and data (mortgages, life insurance, patients).** Servicing a customer can last a lifetime (or longer) and can be costly and need extensive support. By focusing on user experience, ongoing management insight and the ability to handle multiple file types and sometimes conflicting retention rules and access privileges, solutions in these use cases can deliver huge ROI.
- **Costly processes initiated by customers (social services, complaints and claims).** These solutions usually emphasize collaboration, Web access, connection to CRM applications and ease of use. More important, sometimes, is entitlement assessment and management insight into costs and the efficiency of those demanding or delivering such services.

Table 1. Weighting for Critical Capabilities in Use Cases

Critical Product Capabilities	Overall	Collaborative Forms-Based Case Management (HR, New Retail Bank Accounts, Tax Filings)	Knowledge Workers Collaborating on Internal Content (Pharma, Legal, Engineering and Auditing Sectors)	Regulated Customer-Facing File Folders and Data (Mortgages, Life Insurance, Patients)	Costly Processes Initiated by Customers (Social Services, Complaints and Claims)
Balanced content, collaboration and process services within an SOA framework	20.0%	15.0%	20.0%	15.0%	25.0%
Integrates well with other critical content and process components	10.0%	5.0%	20.0%	15.0%	5.0%
Intelligent and versatile on-ramps and off-ramps	10.0%	20.0%	5.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Early focus on a core vertical or horizontal configuration	10.0%	10.0%	15.0%	10.0%	5.0%
Application interfaces to CRM, ERP, SCM, legacy and Web data	10.0%	15.0%	15.0%	10.0%	15.0%
Comprehensive and highly configurable case-based user interface	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Business-user-friendly dashboards, models, policies, rules and reporting	15.0%	10.0%	5.0%	15.0%	15.0%
Mature, certified and sustainable partner ecosystem	10.0%	10.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
SOA = service-oriented architecture, SCM = supply chain management					

Source: Gartner (December 2009)

Inclusion Criteria

To be included as a CCA/case management vendor, a company must have achieved the following:

- It must have marketed vertical solutions as a key product offering directly or through partners for the last 12 months.
- It must have at least \$20 million in ECM or BPMS revenue, with a substantial contribution from CCAs.
- It must have demonstrated a market focus on case management and success measures related to its suitability and overall ease of deployment.
- It must offer a stand-alone application framework or template, without relying on another suite for all the core functionality.

Critical Capabilities Rating

In this research we have identified eight critical capabilities that differentiate CCA vendors in the context of case management. Each of the products that meet our inclusion criteria has been evaluated against the critical capabilities, on a scale of 1.0 to 5.0, with 1.0 being the lowest score and 5.0 the highest (see Table 2).

Table 2. Product Rating Against Critical Capabilities

Critical Product Capabilities	Adobe LiveCycle	EMC Documentum xCP	IBM FileNet P8	K2 Case Management	Open Text ECM Suite, Case Management	Global 360 Case360	Oracle Case Management
Balanced content, collaboration and process services within an SOA framework	3.5	4.0	4.5	2.5	3.5	3.0	4.0
Integrates well with other critical content and process components	3.0	4.0	4.5	3.0	3.5	3.5	4.0
Intelligent and versatile on-ramps and off-ramps	4.5	4.5	3.0	1.5	3.0	2.5	3.5
Early focus on a core vertical or horizontal configuration	3.0	3.0	3.5	1.5	3.0	3.5	3.5
Application interfaces to CRM, ERP, SCM, legacy and Web data	2.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.5
Comprehensive and highly configurable case-based user interface	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.5
Business-user-friendly dashboards, models, policies, rules and reporting	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.5
Mature, certified and sustainable partner ecosystem	2.5	3.5	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.5
SOA = service-oriented architecture, SCM = supply chain management							

Source: Gartner (December 2009)

To determine an overall score for each product in the use cases, the ratings in Table 2 were multiplied by the weightings shown in Table 1. These scores are shown in Table 3, which also gives our assessment of each product's viability.

Table 3. Product Score in Use Cases

Use Cases	Adobe LiveCycle	EMC Documentum xCP	IBM FileNet P8	K2 Case Management	Open Text ECM Suite, Case Management	Global 360 Case360	Oracle Case Management
Overall	3.2	3.7	3.8	2.8	3.2	3.2	3.8
Collaborative forms-based case management (HR, new retail bank accounts, tax filings)	3.3	3.8	3.7	2.7	3.1	3.1	3.8
Knowledge workers collaborating on internal content (pharma, legal, engineering and auditing sectors)	3.1	3.7	3.9	2.7	3.2	3.2	3.9
Regulated customer-facing file folders and data (mortgages, life insurance, patients)	3.2	3.7	3.8	2.9	3.2	3.3	3.8
Costly processes initiated by customers (social services, complaints and claims)	3.3	3.7	3.8	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.8
Product Viability	Good	Good	Excellent	Fair	Good	Good	Excellent
<p>Note: Product viability is distinct from the critical capability scores for each product. It is our assessment of the vendor's strategy and its ability to enhance and support a product over its expected life cycle.</p>							

Source: Gartner (December 2009)

Vendors

Adobe

Adobe's LiveCycle solution for case management is a set of related products that together can provide content, process, collaboration, document security and a compelling end-user experience. Adobe's own assets (principally LiveCycle Enterprise Suite [ES], the Acrobat family and the Flash platform) qualify as a case-based platform. It contains data services/modeling for application support, has robust standards-based on/off-ramp capabilities, and ties content repository access directly into its development environment so that documents and processes are uniformly managed within their framework. These product couplings complete the framework foundation for competing in case management.

Adobe's first successes as a solutions provider using LiveCycle came in the government space. Adobe's solutions for case management leverage four strong value propositions:

1. Adobe's strength in the development and delivery of collaborative e-forms and secure documents that leverage PDF, Flash and XML formats.
2. Adobe has competitive components that are market leaders in their own right. The BPMS core of LiveCycle is flexible, relatively easy to use and robust. Its content componentry includes a completely embedded (and open-source) Alfresco repository and a good set of content services. It owns a strong Web-based collaboration offering in Acrobat Connect Pro and the recently launched LiveCycle Collaboration Service. And it extends the value of Adobe Flash Player and Adobe Reader, which are already installed on most desktops.
3. Adobe has experience and focus in supporting case-based solutions development for government agencies, and has a strong set of references in that sector.
4. The partner ecosystem surrounding LiveCycle has been growing; a particular focus on rich Internet applications and compelling end-user experiences makes Adobe a good development platform for role-based clients for case management workers, constituents and managers.

Adobe's case management platform is designed to work on a composite basis. It is a fully extensible services-based set of server components that collectively offer good control over data and content integration, security and rights management and process application development. Through the use of the free reader and the new portfolio capabilities added in Acrobat 9, Adobe offers offline (disconnected) case management experiences that are the equivalent of the online experience. The related products typically included in the case management kit are Adobe Acrobat Professional, Adobe LiveCycle Digital Signatures, Adobe LiveCycle Rights Management, Adobe LiveCycle Reader Extensions, Adobe LiveCycle Process Management, Adobe LiveCycle Forms, Adobe LiveCycle PDF Generator and Adobe LiveCycle Content Services. Looking ahead, Adobe customers will also be able to use the newly launched LiveCycle Mosaic ES2 to deliver contextual workspaces, bringing together all information surrounding a case from various back-end systems into a single composite user interface.

While the cost and complexity of the Adobe solutions tend to be high when compared to some other vendors, for the right use cases Adobe offers a very strong set of products.

EMC Documentum

EMC Documentum xCelerated Composition Platform (xCP) is designed to support case-based solutions development. As a foundation, it is robust and features a good balance of content and

process functionality. The Documentum family includes core ECM and BPM suites, and extends to integrated archiving, e-discovery and compliance (EMC SourceOne), secure extended enterprise collaboration (EMC CenterStage), intelligent capture (EMC Captiva), reusable user interface components (TaskSpace), and customer communications management (EMC Document Sciences). Collectively, these capabilities are exposed as services within the xCP platform and extend EMC's overall value proposition for case management solutions development.

Designed from the outset to support CCA development, Documentum xCP case management componentry actually encompasses ten core products, ranging from intelligent on-ramping via forms and image capture, to a core set of content and process services, to a composition engine for dynamic contextual communications. The Documentum family includes a number of market-leading products that are exposed through the platform and that can be quickly configured for a number of use cases. Although EMC Documentum will deliver reference applications as part of its case management offering, it is strategically focused on attracting an ecosystem of SI and ISV partners to embrace and extend the platform for their own customers.

The xCP concept of "configuration versus coding" gets to the heart of the argument for adopting solutions in CCAs. And although the number of case management references and configurations from Documentum is low, the logic in providing a balanced platform and a base configuration should help reduce the overall cost for any enterprise that needs case management. EMC's product is made up of the right parts and its strategy is well articulated; these factors should yield value for both buyers and partners. Execution on the plan is at an early stage, but enterprises — particularly those already investing in EMC — should begin to investigate xCP as a good prospect for case-based processes. EMC Documentum is the first leading ECM vendor to acknowledge that a transactional content management suite should be delivered with an out-of-the-box case management base configuration to build a better argument for ROI.

Global 360

Global 360's Case360 is a relatively mature CCA set from a provider with a balanced content and process technology heritage. Its marketing focus is on fast deployment, lower overall costs and reusable process logic. Case360 includes all the basic components: a virtual file system, process controls, collaboration, audit trail and a user interface to task management and status reporting. What distinguishes Global 360 from other content and process vendors is its detailed understanding of the landscape of case management types and the need to sell solutions that deliver immediate business value while engaging with and empowering end users better. Unlike several of the others, though, Global 360 has limited partnerships to promote its message.

Consistent with its shift in focus toward BPMS in recent years, Global 360 doesn't directly market ECM capabilities and has thus been hidden from some buyers. Although its product capabilities are extensive and in balance, its market messaging is much closer to process than content, though it offers options there. As Global 360 is one of the original members of Microsoft's Business Process Alliance, it cedes territory to SharePoint in basic content services as part of that strategic partnership, even as it also offers robust content capabilities above and beyond SharePoint. Unlike K2, it hasn't (yet) built a case management solution set exclusively for SharePoint. Moreover, it has some work to do in creating a seamless unified ECM/BPMS foundation.

Case360 is a complete case management platform that balances people, process, content, collaboration, compliance and insight in a well-devised solution that has the advantage of time-tested implementation in its numerous reference accounts. Its content and collaboration functionality is weaker than its process components. Although we give credit to its pioneer status in configuring a CCA that is well conceived and executed, some concerns about its broader

solutions strategy and market focus remain. In recent years, Global 360 pointed itself so much toward the process domain that some earlier products and customers in the content area couldn't always keep up. And, while its out-of-the-box value proposition of process and content solutions seems clear, the messaging and availability of its new viewPoint role-based application interfaces may confuse some buyers. Among its catalog of offerings, the BPMS and Case360 solutions are likely to relate best to the inquiry demand expressed by Gartner's clients.

IBM FileNet

IBM FileNet Business Process Framework for case management was originally based on a unified platform that was a leader in both the ECM and BPMS markets. Since most case management configurations typically rely on a balance of content and process functionality, it was hard to go too far wrong when a vendor offered scalability, comprehensive control over content objects, records management, rich process tools, services orientation, and a partner ecosystem that didn't solely depend on IBM's own services to configure solutions on top of the framework. Despite some weakness in collaboration and user experience, IBM FileNet continues to deliver scalable and extensible functionality both directly and via its ValueNet partners.

IBM's overall content and process product overlaps — and sometimes incompatibilities — notwithstanding, the strategic value of the FileNet acquisition may be in: 1) the expression of the information agenda catalog; and 2) the engagement of a large number of ISV partners eager to extend the process framework for case management in vertical and horizontal directions, where IBM would not or could not deliver the right price/performance ratio with typical custom engagements. Vendors with such a significant stake in services can also recognize that solutions that reduce the ratio of services to software licenses can deliver value to partners that extend the platform while they reap the reward of volume selling based on repeatability.

But the Business Process Framework for case management has recently been layered under the IBM FileNet Business Process Manager product, thus removing it from an already weak spotlight role in the solutions catalog, and it may take a while for the newly designated "agile enterprise content management" in the updated brand hierarchy to find the buyers it deserves. Though its functional capabilities have grown in the areas of process design, analytics and ECM widgets for a better content client (powered by WebSphere), the degree of difficulty in buying a "case management solution" from IBM has also grown, as so many products and parts could apply. For example, the recent acquisition of Lombardi's BPM suite could also significantly expand IBM's strategic CCA potential. Nevertheless — even at present strength given overall product functionality and partner ecosystem — IBM is formidable.

K2

K2's Case Management Framework represents the closest present-day approximation of what a "pure SharePoint" ECM suite configuration could be. There are a number of enterprises looking for a flexible case framework based on Microsoft SharePoint (Windows SharePoint Services and Microsoft Office SharePoint Server [MOSS]), and K2 has become a front-runner by understanding the gaps in both technology and process definition, and by completing the puzzle without losing sight of the basic economies driving SharePoint adoption. K2's Case Management Framework focuses on auditability and rich information presented in role-based context via its flexible, intuitive interface.

K2's blackpearl BPMS, though not specifically designed for case-based collaboration and content management, is perfectly suited to balancing the need to provision content to its users with relating that use to overall process activity monitoring, dashboard analytics and reporting for management, leveraging Microsoft tools where applicable. The prevalence of SharePoint in enterprises obviates the need to "own" a content repository or portal or collaboration toolset, and

K2 leverages as much of the Microsoft components as possible without overlap or typical integration or implementation costs.

K2, though, is still not recognized as a vertical solutions specialist and has partnered with a leading services vendor for the process models, taxonomies, folder structure and logic of the framework. Although K2 owns the rights and continues to enhance the framework, the chance to have it certified as a "best practice" by the global SI partner was lost. This may have cost some momentum in a market growing quickly to include some very large competitors. Buyers will have to rely on K2 to maintain and promote the framework and to continue to build references, use cases and definitions, and to leverage feedback from its newly formed case management community and partnerships.

Open Text

Open Text's ECM Suite Applications for Case Management are really two distinct products: one is devised to closely couple to Microsoft MOSS, and the other — which we score here — is a more comprehensive case framework based on the capabilities of Open Text's ECM Suite, including document management, records management, workflow and archiving. The latter more closely qualifies as a platform for CCA development and features a number of very strong components that control content life cycle, promote better collaboration and manage risk. Open Text's numerous Livelink implementations have yielded valuable configuration experience now expressed as a framework within the ECM Suite. Among the leaders in the ECM market, no other vendor more effectively promotes case management as a deliverable framework and value proposition.

Despite focusing on the market opportunity, the Open Text technology for case management is not always as easy, inexpensive or comprehensive as that of some competitors. Open Text could focus on distinguishing itself with more business-user-friendly administration, a very engaging and elegant case-configured user interface, intelligent capture, and limited overlap with basic content services in response to market decision drivers. As an enterprise-class technology provider with an extended product portfolio, there are numerous opportunities to cross-sell in customer accounts and to cross-pollinate products. The mix of features promoted as part of its case management framework might favor a couple of mix-and-match options across products other than those already at the core of Open Text ECM Suite. "More content and process services and fewer products" might be its mantra.

Product maturity, expression and execution on strategy and strong management all favor Open Text as a solutions provider. Much of the domain expertise expressed by the framework is gathered from customer engagements, however. Open Text will boost its profile in CCA markets when it builds a stronger partner alliance program and makes partners' contributions to defining and delivering solutions more visible.

Oracle

Oracle — and by extension the Oracle Case Management solution — has three undeniable advantages over its competitors:

1. It owns the connections to ERP, CRM and other application data for many Oracle shops.
2. It has all the portal, content, collaboration and process management product components to configure an excellent solutions platform.
3. It has also set its sights on building a bigger profile in terms of BPMS, ECM and CCAs, and has executed well in the past year to deliver against its plan.

In terms of product development it is clearly on track. In terms of sales and marketing execution, however, there's clearly room for improvement. Oracle Case Management is not yet a fully developed and comprehensive framework that runs content-rich applications developed by solution partners. But the present market demand for case management solutions among government agencies, coupled with Oracle's Siebel CRM, BPMS, ECM and integration products, qualifies Oracle as a provider given customer references and an existing commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solution for CRM-focused case management for government.

Oracle's challenge as it continues to promote COTS solutions versus a framework model for CCAs will be twofold. The first issue is that it won't be able to leverage its competitors' marketing as they define case management as a configuration (or a starting kit or template or solution accelerator) rather than the final deliverable. Flexibility overall, and specifically agile, iterative process refinement, is key to persuading the market that it controls the outcome but doesn't have to pay for custom code. The second issue is that Oracle, by selling its own database licenses and applications as part of its solutions, will limit the enthusiasm of potential outside solutions or application partners. Although it brokers data very well, Oracle may be reluctant to broker partnerships with application vendors in key verticals, despite the benefit to its customers of a single view of content, data and process — even if not all are completely owned by Oracle.

Finally, though, in 2009 Oracle did complete the conversion of various content, process and portal pieces to create an integrated standards-based and service-oriented BPMS, ECM, portal and collaboration set that easily configures for case management of any kind. How soon Oracle's solutions team determines the potential and delivers the market message and framework is unclear. For now, Oracle has delivered compelling technology but no configuration of it specifically (and reusably) for case management. Oracle still needs to demonstrate that it can pull all the pieces together from product to promotion and from partners to profit.

BOTTOM LINE

CCAs represent an emerging category where optimizing the interfaces between people, process and content relates to the need that business buyers of technology have to get ROI. Case management frameworks — sometimes base configurations and sometimes more complete solutions — always represent value for buyers because they generally lower the cost and difficulty of ECM or BPMS implementation, while also reducing the cost and inefficiency of specific business processes. A good CCA starting point for enterprise business planners, enterprise architects and line-of-business leaders is to review the benefits of a reusable, vendor-supported case management configuration and score vendor offerings based on critical capabilities for the most likely usage scenarios.

RECOMMENDED READING

"Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Content Management"

"Magic Quadrant for Business Process Management Suites"

"Critical Capabilities for Enterprise Content Management Platforms"

"Top 10 Technology Trends Impacting Information Infrastructure, 2009 to 2010"

"Case Management Is a Challenging BPMS Use Case"

Note 1

Critical Capabilities Methodology

"Critical capabilities" are attributes that differentiate products in a class in terms of their quality and performance. Gartner recommends that users consider this one of the most important criteria for acquisition decisions. This methodology requires analysts to identify the critical capabilities for a class of products. Each capability is then weighted in terms of its relative importance overall, as well as for specific product use cases. (The sum of weights across capabilities equals 100%.)

Next, products are rated in terms of how well they achieve each of the critical capabilities. A score that summarizes how well they meet the critical capabilities overall, and for each use case, is then calculated for each product. Ratings and summary scores range from greater than 1.0 to 5.0:

1 = Poor: most or all defined requirements not achieved.

2 = Fair: some requirements not achieved.

3 = Good: meets requirements.

4 = Excellent: meets or exceeds some requirements.

5 = Outstanding: significantly exceeds requirements.

Product viability is our assessment of the vendor's strategy and its ability to enhance and support a product over its expected life cycle; it is not an evaluation of the vendor as a whole. Each product is rated on five-point scale from "poor" to "outstanding." Four major areas are considered: strategy, support, execution and investment. Strategy includes how a vendor's strategy for a particular product fits in relation to its other product lines, market direction and its business overall. Support includes the quality of technical and account support and customer experiences for that product. Execution considers a vendor's structure and processes for sales, marketing, pricing and deal management. Investment considers the vendor's financial health and the likelihood that the individual business unit responsible for a product will continue to invest in it.

The eight critical capabilities that Gartner has selected here may not represent those that are most important for a specific use situation or business objective. Clients should use an analysis of critical capabilities as one of several sources of input about a product before making an acquisition decision.

Note 2

Composite Content Applications

The term "composite content application" (CCA) relates better to both vertical and horizontal examples of solutions where collections of content, the platforms that store and manage them, the processes that leverage them, and the context required to deliver value from them for the benefit of end users and business buyers are optimized by technology vendors and their domain-expert partners. Apart from referring to modern composite application development, the term also refers to both the componentization of content and the value of combinations of systems and information to create new, strengthened value propositions and business outcomes. It replaces the former term "content-enabled vertical application" (CEVA) to describe solutions based on ECM and sometimes BPM suites.

Note 3

Content Management Interoperability Services

In September 2008, EMC, IBM, Microsoft and other vendors announced that they had developed a Web services protocol, called Content Management Interoperability Services (CMIS). CMIS governs the exchange of content between ECM repositories. The vendors have registered CMIS with the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS). Alfresco Software, Open Text, Oracle and SAP helped to test CMIS. CMIS has gained momentum and was in public review as of December 2009. Gartner believes that the CMIS standard could succeed because of widespread support from the content management vendor community, and its basis in SOA — using Web service standards such as SOAP and representational state transfer to provide options for interoperability. We expect this standard to mature and become broadly evident in product strategies during 2010.

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