

EMA RADAR for Workload Automation (WLA): Q4 2019



An Enterprise Management Associates® Radar Report

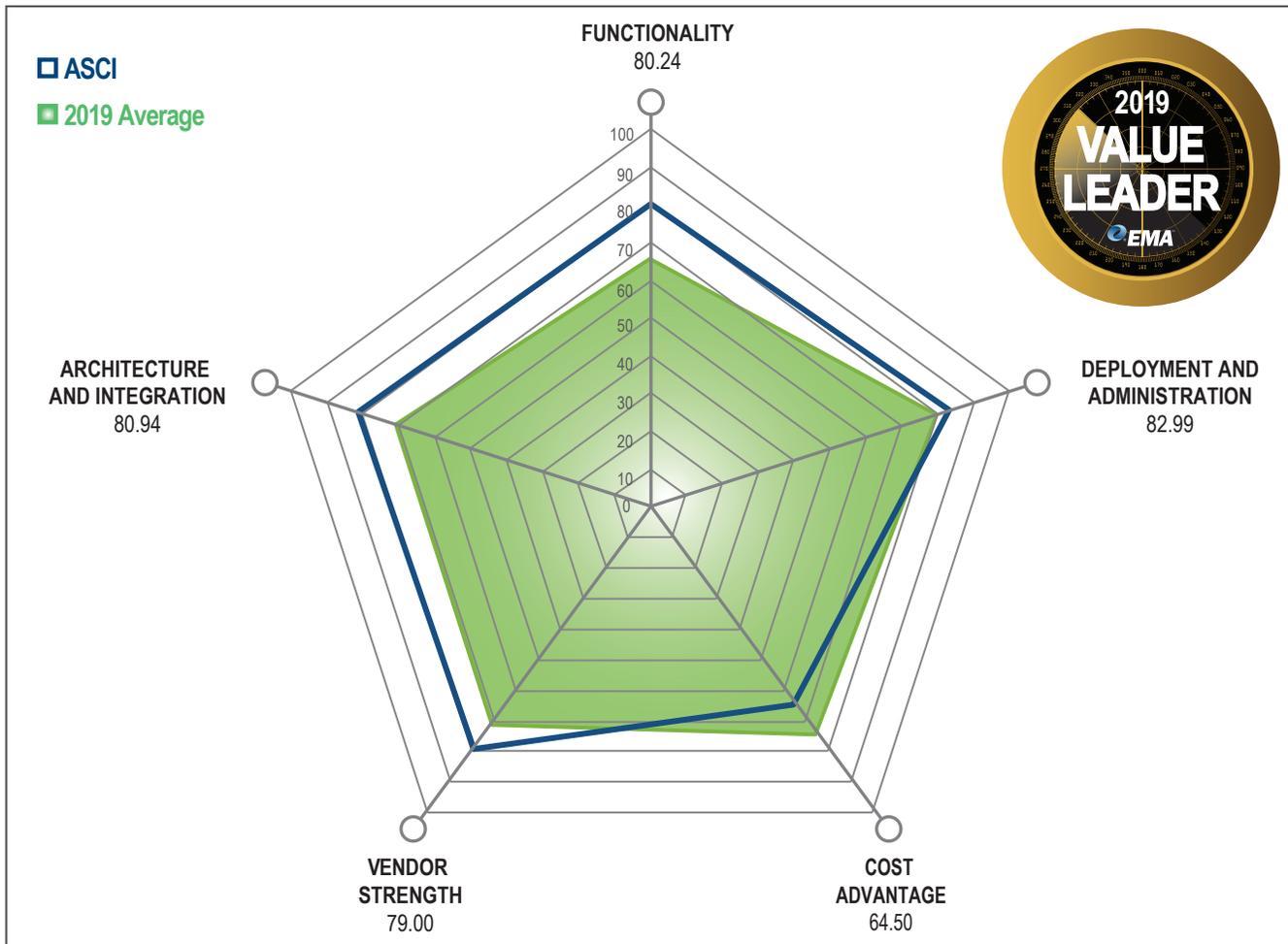
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Q4 2019

OVERVIEW



ASCI ActiveBatch is once again a Value Leader. The product's Integrated Jobs Library offers hundreds of prebuilt job steps, and the Service Library extends this power with strong API accessibility. ActiveBatch recently introduced a new REST API, added performance improvements for Microsoft SQL Server and Service Broker, and enhanced the FTP Event Trigger. New security features include multifactor authentication for the ActiveBatch Console, Web Console, Self-Service Portal and Mobile Operations (mobile application), and an out-of-the-box integration with CyberArk that allows workflows to dynamically retrieve credentials at runtime, simplifying credential management for workflows. To EMA, the standout feature is still the automated provisioning and deprovisioning of virtual and cloud-based resources, based on historical and predictive analytics. This was augmented with Heuristic Queue Allocation to add machine learning to enhance the performance of machine resources. ActiveBatch V12 also includes dynamic, user-defined queue characteristics, which can allow developers to configure workflows to monitor Queue Characteristics at runtime and select the Execution Queue best suited for the job. ASCI has also stepped up their services with ActiveBatch Academy, an online training portal, and a user certification program. ActiveBatch is a great choice to manage a diverse IT landscape across workload automation, business process automation, IT process automation, file movements, and big data within a single unified console designed for operational efficiency.



VENDOR PROFILE: ASCI

Founded in 1981 in Hoboken and currently headquartered in Morristown, New Jersey, Advanced Systems Concepts, Inc. (ASCI) is a privately-held software firm with a line of multiple enterprise software products, including ActiveBatch workload automation, XLNT command and scripting language, and RemoteSHADOW disaster recovery products for Unix and OpenVMS. EMA reviewed ActiveBatch version 12 for this report.

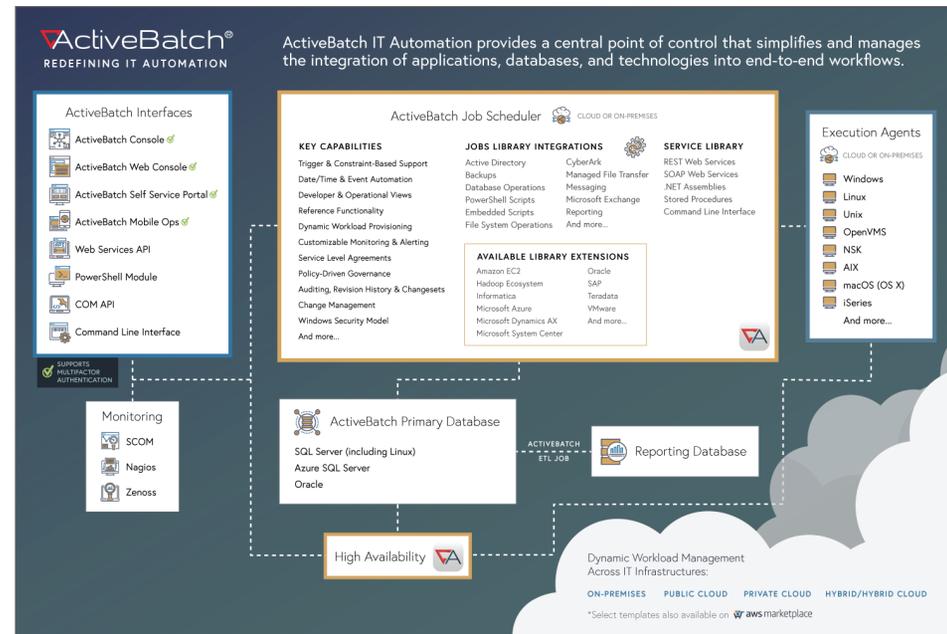
ARCHITECTURE

ActiveBatch makes use of a dynamic, event-driven architecture to effectively manage and automate business and IT processes based on near-real time requirements.

KEY FEATURES SUMMARY

Workflow Development and Optimization Tools

ActiveBatch provides a flexible, real-time, graphical display and dynamic development environment with Map View. Map View is a centralized, 360-degree interface that allows users to build, design, modify, schedule, optimize, simulate, and trigger workflows all from a single pane. An Integrated Jobs Library provides drag-and-drop access to hundreds of prebuilt integrations. Workflow Optimizer graphically presents completion times, while Simulation Mode simulates a workflow to test logic.



ActiveBatch Architecture



VENDOR PROFILE: ASCI

Dynamic, Event-Driven Automation

ActiveBatch supports an extensive array of events, including application integrations, email, files, message queues, databases, etc. The Job Scheduler monitors the systems for incorporated events so workflows can begin unhindered execution after the events are declared.

Flexible Job Scheduling

ActiveBatch supports both trigger-based and constraint-based scheduling. Trigger-based includes extensive calendar features and ensures idle or wait time is eliminated. Constraint-based scheduling breaks from time-specific scheduling and allows jobs to start when constraints are met, and can support rolling the start of the business day across time zones.

Reference Objects and Variables

Jobs can be defined as templates for reuse, easy maintenance, and global changes. Reference Templates can include variables to share data with other jobs or objects, and provide more reusability compared to hard-coded values.

Managed File Transfer and Hadoop/Big Data Integration

ActiveBatch includes predefined Managed File Transfer (MFT) job steps and support for a variety of file transfer protocols, advanced file filtering, parallel file transfer functionality, FTP file trigger, and built-in reliability checks made for effective MFT. Integration for the Hadoop Ecosystem includes Pig, Hive, HBase, HDFS, Sqoop, MapReduce, Spark, Oozie, and more. This integration includes prebuilt content (ActiveBatch Job Steps) for assembly into big data workflows, as well as an HDFS File Trigger.

Machine Learning, Algorithms, and Cloud Marketplace

Heuristic Queue Allocation in ActiveBatch allows for seamless scalability using machine learning to analyze historical data for optimal allocation of future Execution Queues (machine paths) to intelligently distribute job loads across available and acceptable Execution Agents. This reduces slack time and idle machine resources.

ActiveBatch tools and integrations help IT professionals manage automated processes within cloud, on-premises, and hybrid environments. Managed/Smart Queue facilities dynamically scale resources up or down based on real-time demands and historical analysis of past scheduling periods to minimize unnecessary expense and increase the likelihood of successful, on-time job completion. The ActiveBatch Integrated Jobs Library helps users construct workflows to provision, terminate, manage, and configure their resources. With Amazon Machine Images (AMIs) and CloudFormation Templates for ActiveBatch on AWS Marketplace, organizations can quickly adapt to changing environmental conditions, at scale.

Policy-Driven Governance

Organizations are provided with a single, authoritative source to know exactly what's running and when, with the ability to easily control and monitor the behavior and security of workflows. Check-out/Check-in functionality allows multiple developers to simultaneously work on the same objects. Change sets allow users to track, associate, and identify multiple object changes over time as part of a single check-in, or rollback multiple changes at one time. Change Management allows users to rollback, restore, and audit groups of changes.

Customizable Alerting and Monitoring

ActiveBatch supports over 60 different alert types across all object types (jobs, plans, queues, scheduler, etc.) and offers reusable alert objects to notify users and operations when a specified condition is raised. Each alert is deliverable, using 12 different delivery methods including email, JMS, Microsoft Message Queues, SMS text, Twitter, SNMP, Skype, Office Communicator, and more. This group includes monitoring and alerting workflows with completions tied to a service-level agreement (SLA) or business policy.

SLA Integration and Support

SLA Monitor allows for specific attention to SLA-marked objects, with emphasis on providing insight toward whether the SLA is expected to be met or breached. When a workflow reaches a defined critical stage, ActiveBatch can trigger supporting actions and jobs to help remediate the issue.

Variety of User and Programmatic Interfaces

The variety of interfaces includes admin “thick” clients, full web consoles, self-service portals for the help desk and business users, and native mobile support, as well as full inbound and outbound web services API.

Security-Focused Automation

ActiveBatch includes support for the Microsoft Security Model for consistency within an organization's existing security implementation, as well as an out-of-the-box integration with CyberArk Application Access Manager to bring Privileged Access Management. Workflows can dynamically retrieve credentials at runtime so jobs have the appropriate access, and changes to passwords and usernames are no longer a concern.



EVALUATION SUMMARY

DEPLOYMENT & ADMINISTRATION

EASE OF DEPLOYMENT

Deployment Time/Effort	Outstanding
Conversion Facilities	Strong
Job Discovery & Import	Strong
Staff Training	Outstanding

SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Customer Support	Strong
Professional Services	Outstanding

EASE OF ADMINISTRATION

Console Ease of Use	Outstanding
Upgrade Process	Strong
Test Environments	Solid
Automation of Management	Outstanding

ARCHITECTURE & INTEGRATION

ARCHITECTURE

Business Focus	Outstanding
Scalability	Outstanding
Dynamic Workload Placement	Strong
Breadth of Platform Support (incl. agentless)	Outstanding
Breadth of Application & Database Support	Outstanding
Disaster Protection	Outstanding
Containerized Workloads	Strong
Container Deployment	Outstanding

INTEGRATION/INTEROPERABILITY

Comprehensive API	Outstanding
Cloud Integration	Strong
CMDB Integration	Solid
ITPA Integration	Solid
Capacity Management Integration	Outstanding
MFT Integration	Outstanding
Big Data Integration	Solid
Social Media Integration	Limited
Heterogeneity Across Environments	Outstanding
Developers Schedule in Code (DevOps)	Strong

EVALUATION SUMMARY



FUNCTIONALITY

FEATURES	
Automation Design Flexibility	Outstanding
End-to-End Monitoring	Outstanding
Compliance Management	Strong
Triggering	Outstanding
Self-Service Portal	Outstanding
Forecasting, Analytics, & Reporting	Outstanding
Alerting	Strong
Security	Strong
What-If Scenarios	Strong
Conditional Logic & Auto Remediation	Outstanding
Logging/Auditability	Outstanding
Business User Features	Outstanding
Hadoop Support	Strong
RPA Orchestration	Limited
EASE OF USE	
Simplicity of GUI	Outstanding
SLA & Policy Awareness	Outstanding
Root Cause Analysis	Strong
Mobile Device Support	Outstanding
Language Support	Solid
Available Help Resources	Outstanding

COST ADVANTAGE

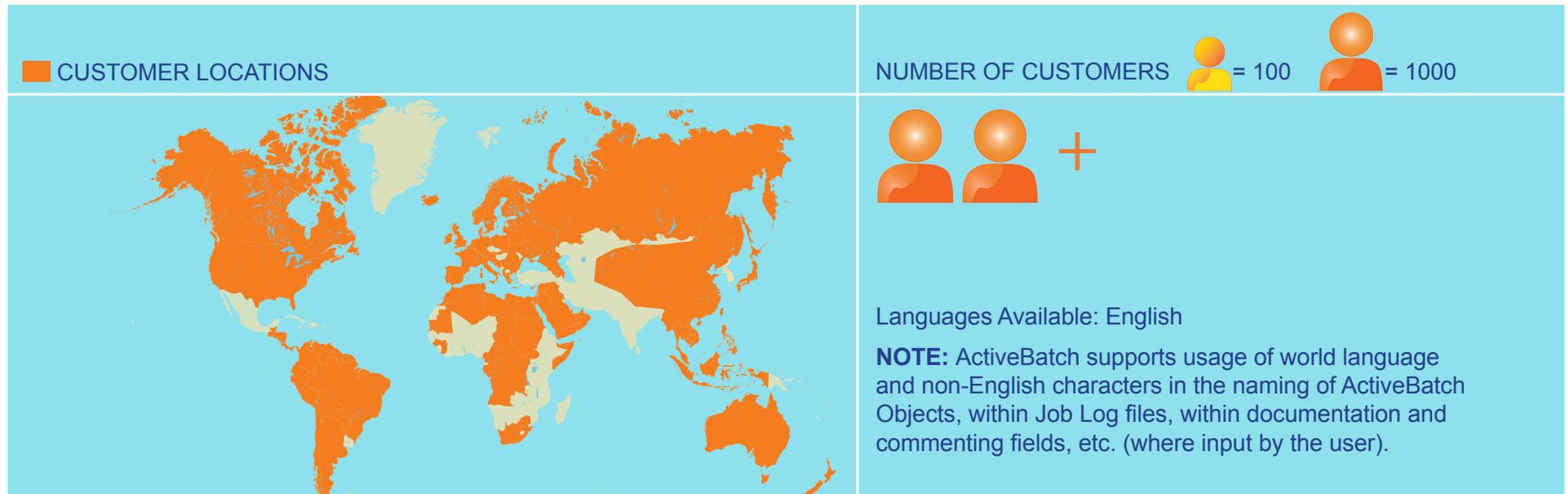
Flexibility of Licensing Model	Outstanding
Pricing Scenarios	\$\$\$
SaaS Availability	None



VENDOR STRENGTH

Vision	Outstanding
Strategy	Strong
Financial Strength	Strong
Research & Development	Strong
Partnerships/Channel	Solid
Market Credibility	Outstanding
Geographic Coverage	Strong





FAVORITE FEATURES MENTIONED IN CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

"ASCI can run jobs in parallel and monitor it all so you know what is going on. You can launch a dozen Cron tabs in parallel, but you cannot monitor that. Our 6.5-hour job was reduced to 40 minutes with ActiveBatch."

"By centralizing all the code in ASCI, we can move things to new servers with a few clicks."

"Support is very good. Whenever we have a question or issue, we get a very quick response."

"Whenever I ask a question, the answer is 'Yes, ActiveBatch can do it!'"

"Anyone who cannot get value out of this product at this price point is certainly doing something wrong."

"The Reference Jobs function is a favorite feature. Using a Master Job for setup, you can change the master and all that reference it change."

"We take advantage of load balancing and round robin."



About Enterprise Management Associates, Inc.

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data 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 EMA's clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals, and IT vendors at www.enterprisemanagement.com or blog.enterprisemanagement.com.

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