

WORKLOAD AUTOMATION BUYER'S GUIDE:

Why The Right Tool Is About
More Than Features





Purchasing a workload automation solution is a big decision. Choose the right tool and it will enable your team to unify its automation environments, providing a foundation on which to build an enterprise automation strategy. But pick the wrong one and you're going to waste time and resources — not to mention negatively impact your workload automation initiative.

The WLA market's evolution is driven by the introduction of new technologies, but not all vendors have kept up. As a result, the WLA market has split in recent years, with some vendors developing their offerings into platforms that support cloud-based and hybrid environments.

Gartner Inc. has recognized this split as a “transformation of a mature market for workload automation tools” that “provide a unified administration console and an orchestration engine to manage data pipelines and event-driven application workflows” in hybrid environments¹.

Today's WLA market includes a variety of vendors big and small, offering products that can accelerate your automation strategy or solidify existing silos.

So, what do you need to consider when choosing the right WLA solution for your organization and needs? Let's start with features.

Product Capabilities And Features

Workload automation solutions offer a range of features and capabilities designed for developers, operators and administrators. These features can be available out-of-the-box or purchased additionally, and are critical to maintaining a reliable, adaptable automation environment.

Key Features By Role

Developers	Operators	Administrators
Content library	Monitoring	Audit trails
References	Alerting	Authentication
Variables	Auto-remediation	Revision tracking
Check Out Check In	Multiple interfaces	Permissioning

Most WLA solutions support date/time scheduling, and include multiple time zones and custom calendars. Make sure the products you are evaluating support event-based automation, with event triggers and constraints that enable flexibility for more use cases.

Many WLA solutions are also distributed, relying on a job scheduler connected to multiple execution servers. This makes it possible to automatically failover jobs and to dynamically distribute jobs based on workload requirements and real-time demands. Intelligent workload distribution helps prevent backlogs and delays, contributing to a highly reliable automation environment.

Different vendors will offer different levels of support for cloud-based workloads. In order to leverage best-of-breed tools, look for WLA solutions that can integrate with multiple cloud vendors. This will give your team workload portability across on-premises, hybrid-cloud and multi-cloud environments. Look for automated provisioning and deprovisioning for cloud-based resources, to support the scaling of your automation environments.

Additionally, talk to vendors about integration capabilities. WLA solutions can offer direct integrations or universal connectors for common tasks, as well as API adapters, though the usability and capabilities of these adapters can vary widely.



How To Assess Workload Automation Vendors

A successful automation strategy relies on your team's ability to orchestrate processes from disparate sources. The right WLA tool will make this possible by enabling your team to manage processes across silos and systems. As a result, WLA solutions help provide the bedrock for enterprise automation strategies. This makes choosing the right vendor all the more important.

The relationship between you and your vendor is critical. Working with the wrong vendor and product can mean implementing another solution in a few years, costing your team precious time and resources while slowing down your organization. More than just features and capabilities, the support and partnership of the vendor should play a critical role in your WLA buying decision.

Here are some key qualities to evaluate when comparing WLA vendors:

Product Roadmap

Make sure you talk to vendors about their product roadmap and what you can expect them to deliver over the next two to five years. Most vendors should be able to explain what new capabilities are under development, and what the goals are for the WLA solution moving forward.

This is important because you want to ensure that the WLA solution will be able to keep up with new technologies and trends and that the vendor is invested in making sure your team will be able to keep up with the changing business requirements.

Vendor History

Of course, a product roadmap means little if the vendor isn't around in five years. So, how can you determine the life expectancy of a potential vendor? Viewing a product roadmap is a good place to start, but also look into the vendor's history. Is the vendor a new start-up without much investment, or is the vendor a market veteran that has been evolving its WLA product for many years?

Vendors that specialize in specific products can often provide more certainty and stability, especially in the WLA market.



Customer Support

Customer support can vary widely between vendors and can have a big impact on the success — or failure — of your automation plans. See if you can compare customer support satisfaction scores between vendors, and look to see what vendors provide 24/7 emergency support.

Also, ask vendors if their support services are provided by an internal team or a third-party business. Customer support teams that work directly for the vendor often have deeper product knowledge and can enlist the help of the product engineering and development teams, which can be useful when implementing a new use case or solving a complex issue.

Customer Success

Market vendors are in the process of improving the customer experience by creating customer success programs. These programs focus on building the client-vendor relationship by providing ongoing resources for customers as well as investments into ease-of-use and optimization technologies.

Customer success programs (CSPs) often include customer success managers or teams being assigned to client accounts, giving customers a single point of contact with the vendor. This can improve support by enabling customer success managers to gain a deeper understanding of customer needs and use cases. This enables the customer success teams to help expand their customers' use of automation via new services and product offerings.

A customer success program will often begin with white glove onboarding in which the vendor works side-by-side with the customer to install and configure the WLA platform. CSPs can also include health checks in which the vendor will assess the customer's automation environment in order to provide specific recommendations to improve ROI.

✓ On-Demand Training

And the last key area to consider is what training vendors will offer. Product training should be designed to help your team consistently improve ROI as automation use cases expand through your organization.

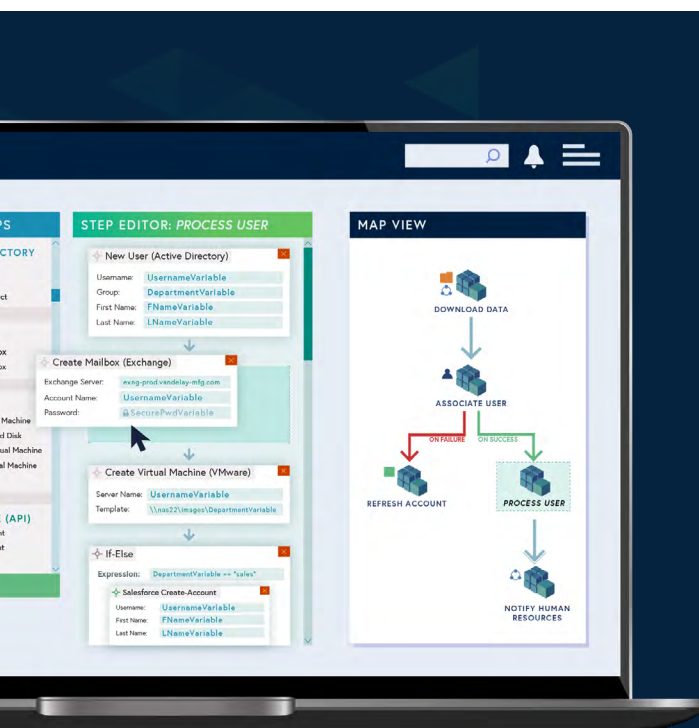
There are a variety of training methods to consider. On-demand training courses can help your team quickly onboard new employees and build skills in your current team. To improve efficacy, training courses should be in-depth and role-based. There may also be some more tailored training offered through the Customer Success program. Ask about all these options so it's clear what is offered and if there's any additional charges

The right WLA tool is a crucial piece in a successful enterprise automation initiative. Make sure you expand your evaluation criteria beyond features. Training and customer success programs can help your team find solutions without having to dig through documentation.

Carefully consider how your preferred partner will help you expand your automation and continue to deliver value through the life of your contract.

Endnotes

1 Gartner, "Market Guide for Service Orchestration and Automation Platforms", April 2020



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help deliver a successful
automation initiative?

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