# 2010-11 Unix Survey: Systems Management, Set-Up, Integration

A major part of the **2010-11 GCG Unix Vendor Preference Survey** is the Vendor Face-Off section. This is where we ask real-world data center personnel to rate the major Unix system vendors (HP, IBM and Oracle) on a wide variety of technical, vendor support, and customer satisfaction criteria.
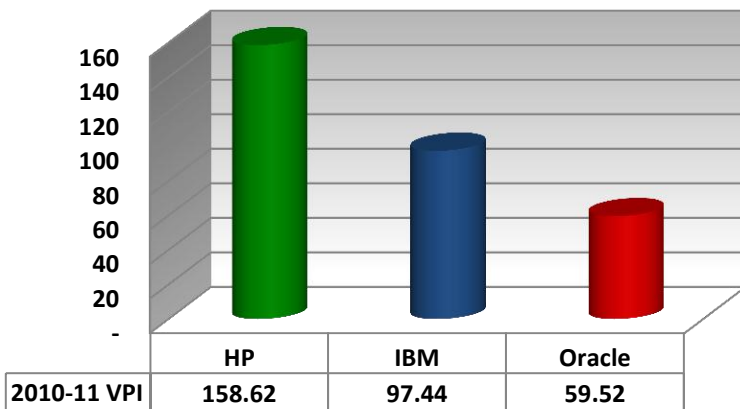
Vendors are rated in terms of their VPI score – a simple normalization technique we use to ensure that results aren't skewed. (For more details on the survey and methodology, click here.) In simple terms, a VPI score of 100 is 'par'. Scores above 100 are good, and scores less than 100 – well, they're not so good.

It's also important to point out that there isn't an overall 'winner' or 'loser' in these surveys. We ask many questions and cover a wide range of topics, some of which are more important to particular customers than to others. For example, some customers would value manageability more highly than performance, while others want high availability most of all.

The Unix system market is highly competitive; vendors push hard to differentiate their offerings on technical, management, service, and customer experience criteria. We see the results of these efforts in the Vendor Face-Off section of our surveys. Customers compare the major vendors on various factors and let us know who's on top, who's trailing, or if they simply don't see much difference between them.

Systems management, including provisioning and data center integration, have become increasingly important as customers try to manage more applications, virtual machines, and more complexity with essentially flat budgets and headcount. The answer to getting more productivity is in automating monitoring and routine management tasks. The major commercial Unix vendors have their own systems management suites that ship with their servers. How do customers rate them?

### Systems Management Suite

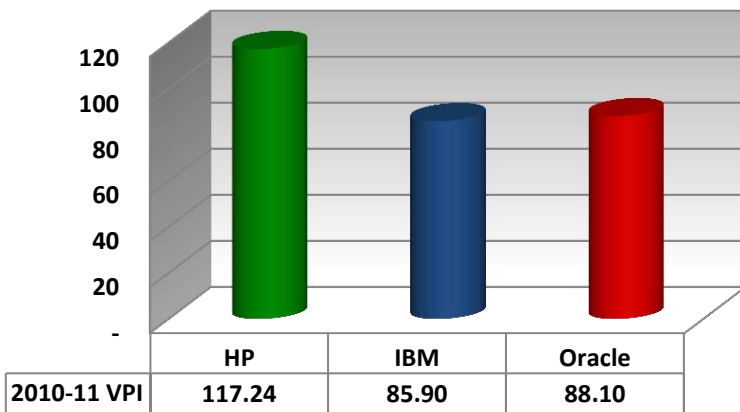| | HP | IBM | Oracle |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 VPI | 158.62 | 97.44 | 59.52 |

HP takes the Systems Management Suite crown for the second consecutive year, handily beating IBM and nearly tripling Oracle's VPI score. As these results show, HP's 'single pane of glass' concept for managing hardware (servers, storage, network) and operating environments (Windows, Linux, Unix, plus virtualization) is resonating with customers.

They aren't the only vendor making this pitch, however. IBM is making the same play with their Director offerings but doesn't seem to be getting as much customer mindshare as HP.

While the first question (above) asks customers which system management suite they believe is the best, this next question gets a bit more specific. Here, we're asking which suite works best for them, in their data center with their unique requirements.

## Real world Manageability

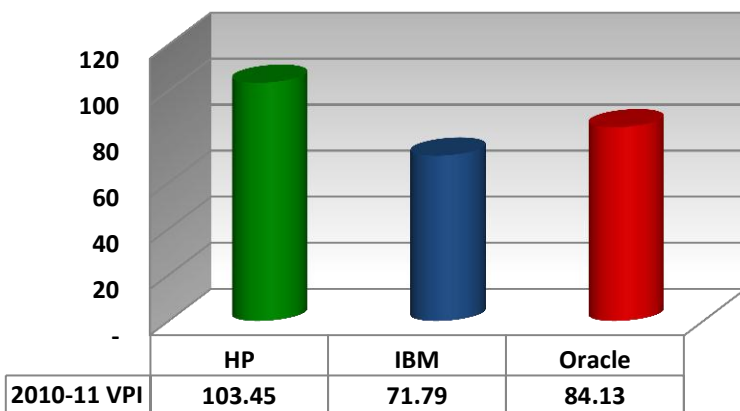| 2010-11 VPI | HP | IBM | Oracle |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 117.24 | 85.90 | 88.10 |

For the second year in a row, HP leads in the 'Real World Manageability' category. Other results have shown that customers believe HP's suite is the "best," but this one shows that they also find it's the best solution for their needs.

We believe that some of HP's dominance in this category is due to their strength in the enterprise x86 server market. This gives them a larger footprint of customers who can see the preinstalled Insight Manager in action.

Another aspect of systems management is how long it takes to assemble a new system, configure it, and make it available for productive use…
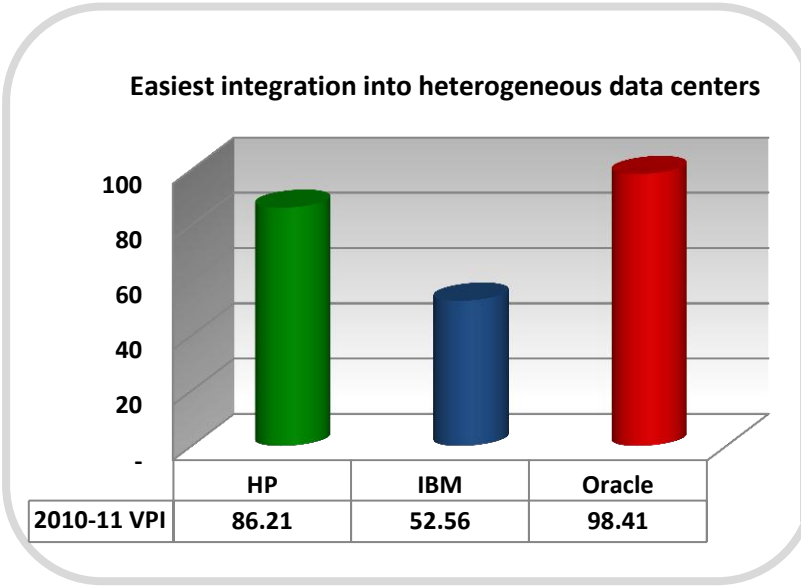
## Quick/easy set-up, Configuration, Provisioning

| 2010-11 VPI | HP | IBM | Oracle |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 103.45 | 71.79 | 84.13 |

This has been a strong category for HP over the past three editions of this survey. This year, by a wide margin, customers say that HP Unix systems are easiest to set up and provision.

One of the hits server vendors take on this topic is that systems are often delivered in very small pieces with badly outdated software – requiring significant effort from customers to simply get the systems to the point where they can be provisioned. Actual provisioning isn't always as straightforward as it could be. HP seems to have made some strides in this area vs. their chief competitors.

The modern data center is a complex place – a constantly changing mix of x86 Windows and Linux systems, older legacy Unix-based servers, plus mainframes and a wide variety of storage arrays and networking gear. Is there much difference in how well commercial Unix brands slide into the typical IT shop?

**Easiest integration into heterogeneous data centers**

| | HP | IBM | Oracle |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 VPI | 86.21 | 52.56 | 98.41 |

No vendor scored greater than 100 on this question, which means that a sizeable chunk (20% this year) say they aren't sure or don't see much difference between vendors on this topic.

This question was more relevant in past years, when there were more Unix competitors and fewer standards in place.

Of the customers who do see a difference, most of them said that Oracle systems were best at co-existing peacefully with other systems. This is one of Oracle's few outright wins on the survey.

This year has been a tour de force for HP on the systems management topics, with solid wins in the two major categories plus a win in set-up and provisioning. As we said earlier, HP isn't the only vendor working toward the 'single pane of glass' enterprise IT management vision. IBM, Oracle, and systems management ISVs are moving down this track as well.

HP is arguably ahead of most of the others in terms of the comprehensiveness of their offerings and perhaps on integration. But their real advantage is that they're doing the best job of telling their story and have been steadily improving that story over time.

If you're interested in finding out more about this survey and seeing more results (demographics, expanded results, detailed GCG analysis), click here.

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