

Informatica Reimagines Customer Service for Hyperscale



Industry: Cloud, Data Management, Service & Support
Date: July 2018

Market Milestone

Executive Summary

Key Stakeholders: Data Management Leaders, Developers, Systems Architects, Operations Managers, CIOs, DevOps Leaders

Why It Matters: As data management systems, and IT systems in general, scale up, they require new service and support offerings that emphasize learning and expert advice.

Top Takeaway: Informatica's new support and service bundles are designed to help customer succeed as they grow from development, to production, and eventually through scale up.

IT System Complexity Is Growing

The introduction of cloud computing has added new convenience, cost control, and flexibility to IT. Cloud computing is now an established starting point for building and deploying large-scale, mission critical, enterprise systems in production conditions.

"Ultimately, the way that Informatica has redesigned their customer service and support offerings mirror the new complexity of the data managed on their platforms." – Tom Petrocelli, Research Fellow, Amalgam Insights

At the same time, IT departments are still deploying systems to on-premises data centers. For reasons of security, privacy, regulatory compliance, or simply to accommodate legacy applications, organizations are continuing to deploy systems to their own data centers. This has led to the emergence of hybrid computing – systems deployed to on-premises datacenters and cloud service providers – and placed them on track to be the dominant architecture for mission-critical enterprise systems.



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In addition, many IT departments that have adopted cloud computing are pursuing a multi-cloud strategy. To ensure availability and to leverage the unique attributes of individual cloud service providers, system architects are now tasked with trying to meld on-premises and multiple cloud components together into unified systems at enterprise scale.

Data Management Challenges in Increasingly Complex Environments

Hybrid cloud architectures create data management challenges. Integrating diverse data stores on multiple platforms for many systems requires extensive knowledge of the data management platform, different APIs, and different types of data stores. Otherwise, the systems based on these platforms may fail at scale.

This data management struggle is becoming even more difficult when microservices architectures are employed. Microservices often lead to fragmented data stores of many different sorts with hundreds of APIs, making advanced data integration exceptionally difficult.

As data management systems massively scale up alongside applications, a number of factors become important to successfully supporting the use and access of enterprise data. These are not necessarily technical factors. For example:

- **Seemingly small design choices can make a difference at scale.** There are hundreds of small decisions like this that can cause a system to behave differently at larger scales. Even which data to include as master data or the format of a commonly used field can cause systems at scale to fail.
- **Decisions made early can affect production later.** Operational and design decisions made early on may turn out not to work well in production, especially at larger scale. The choice of a data store or integration design may become untenable in the current production environment and, especially, under load. There are hundreds of important decisions that are often made upfront that can cause a production system to become inoperable. The worst part of this design process is that the most egregious problems won't be found until much later on, when there are end-users on the system in production.
- **Performance and security become more difficult at scale than for initial production deployments.** Inappropriate partitioning of applications, access controls, and data store design can all cause security threats to emerge or performance to collapse under heavy load. Compromises that were convenient in development can be damaging in production. Security is also quite different when designed for a handful of development users versus thousands of business end-users.



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The solutions to these types of problems are *knowledge and experience*. Unfortunately, when IT practitioners are trying to do something new – implement new technology or develop a new type of application – experience and knowledge may be in short supply. To insure success, IT professionals need to *scale up their knowledge* before they scale up their systems. In addition, they need a source of experience and expertise when they don't have their own. When IT is taking on new and unprecedented challenges, they should be able to lean on their platform vendors as service providers.

The Challenges of Scaling Knowledge

Unfortunately, IT professionals don't have the luxury of time. They must, in a very short time, become familiar with their platforms (including deployment at scale), understand the best ways to design their systems to leverage the technology at hand, develop security policies that are unique to the new platforms, and learn about the nuances that affect performance.

While IT professionals are trying to power up their knowledge and experience, they are under extreme pressure to quickly implement data management platforms and deploy new applications under Agile and Continuous Integration and Deployment regimens. Given the need to come up to speed quickly, often during the course of a project, it is necessary to get help from platform vendors to gain knowledge fast. When IT has tight timeframes to complete work, they must have knowledge sources, training, and support options that are convenient, experienced, and always available to help solve problems at any hour of the day or night.

Informatica Redesigns Service and Support

Recognizing that customers need services that are tailored toward scaling up hybrid, multi-cloud platforms and applications, Informatica has redesigned their service and support options into two Customer Success packages, Premium and Signature. Each package encompasses a set of services geared toward helping customers see value in their Informatica software, whether deployed to the cloud, on-premises, or as hybrid platforms, immediately. These offerings are also geared toward ensuring long-term success as a customer moves from initial learning, to production, and finally further scale-up.

Each new package bundles 24x7 call center support, live support via web conferencing, Adoption Services (a consultative service to help accelerate platform adoption), and online and in-person education. This service set is designed to provide a leap forward from initial platform deployment to production through initial learning and expert advice.



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Analyst Note on Informatica Adoption Services

When implementing any IT technology, it's important to quickly learn the *practical* aspects including deployment and design. Otherwise, projects will flounder as the business waits for IT to come up to speed. This is why many technology vendors will offer quick start programs to help IT become production-ready rapidly.

Informatica understands the value to customers of these types of services and has created its own Adoption Services. Adoption Services provide expert guidance from initial discovery through the first production system. They have also developed a methodology that is unique to data management and Big Data. Adoption Services are part of Informatica's Premium and Signature Success offerings.

As customers begin to scale up Informatica services, the access to experts and education continues to support the customer well past deployment of their first application. When customers begin to move to larger scale deployments, needs quickly change. Amalgam Insights notes that with its customer service offerings, Informatica support and services are designed to change with them.

Informatica has developed a new range of services that address the needs of hyperscale. Beyond the basket of services designed to help bring and maintain production systems, they have grouped advanced services into their Signature Success service package. Especially important are:

- **Ask an Expert.** Ask an Expert allows the customer to set aside time with an Informatica subject matter expert including engineers and product managers. This gives customers a direct line into product development but also the opportunity to ask deep questions that can assist in making good design choices.
- **Emergency Response Teams.** Sometimes, things go terribly bad. When this happens in very large-scale production environments, a specialized team empowered to rapidly manage and resolve problems is in order. This is the role of the Emergency Response Team.
- **Master Pass.** Informatica offers a wide range of no-cost learning options as part of their Success Academy. Designed for advanced users, the Master Pass provides for unlimited access to on-line resources and public instructor led in-person training courses. It also allows for priority access to beta and new release courses, as well as resources to gain Informatica certifications. While the Master Pass is available for a fee, it is included in Signature Success.
- **Proactive Support.** In large-scale systems, small problems can quickly escalate into downtime. Most of these problems don't announce themselves to data managers, developers, or sysadmins ahead of time when their impact is zero or small. Proactive support addresses this by monitoring and analyzing customer environments in order to detect



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problems before they become acute. It may be something as simple as a job running too long or unusual usage patterns but through Proactive Service, Informatica helps customers to manage something seemingly insignificant that may become a major issue later.

By adding these types of advanced services to the support mix, Informatica is providing customers the tools to grow their implementations and meet the needs of supporting enterprise scale.

Recommended Actions

Amalgam Insights has several suggested actions for IT professionals tasked with scaling up to very large systems but especially hybrid, multi-cloud systems:

- Pay attention to those services that bring vendor expertise into your organization directly. Tapping vendor expertise early is a key success factor in designing for scale.
- Consider learning that goes beyond quick starts and addresses longer-term sustainability at scale.
- Don't wait to upgrade services. During early experimental stages of development, basic services are acceptable. Once design of a system has solidified, bad choices can become institutionalized and the system will have a poor foundation for hyperscale.
- Engage with your vendor partner immediately. Waiting too long – after system design or Sprint 0 – to engage the services of vendors means that their expertise cannot be leveraged to the fullest extent.

Key Point: Earlier is always better when planning for hyperscale!

Conclusion

As data management systems continue to increase in both size and complexity, so must knowledge and expertise. Getting up and running, which most vendors support with special quick start programs, is important. Even more important is continued support through to production where added services can make the difference between success and abject failure.

The help IT professionals need in getting to production pales in comparison to the type of services necessary to thrive at scale. There are special issues when scaling up applications that only expertise, not just learning, can mitigate.

Informatica clearly understands this dynamic. They have added services that bring their internal expertise directly to customers who are scaling up significantly. Additional learning helps to prepare



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design and deployment teams. Access to internal Informatica experts is an invaluable resource that can be leveraged to bring about successful, large scale data management systems.

Ultimately, the way that Informatica has redesigned their customer service and support offerings mirrors the new complexity of the data managed on their platforms. Hybrid, multi-cloud data integration supports a multitude of data types from hundreds of sources that are hard to design, build, deploy, and keep running. These types of systems require new types of services to address this complexity at scale. This is at the heart of the changes in Informatica support and service.

Tom Petrocelli
Research Fellow
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About Us

TOM PETROCELLI RESEARCH FELLOW



Tom Petrocelli is a Research Fellow with Amalgam Insights. His area of interest is collaboration, developer tools, IT project efficiency, governance, and methodologies, and DevOps. He also looks

at how large regulated companies, especially financial services companies, manage IT projects. Tom has over 33 years of experience in the IT industry.

Prior to Amalgam Insights, Tom:

- Worked for a large, global, banking corporation.
- Was the research director for Enterprise Social, Mobile and Cloud Applications at Neuralytix.
- Before Neuralytix, Tom was the senior analyst, Social Enterprise at Enterprise Strategy Group.
- Before becoming an analyst, Tom held various senior and executive management positions.



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Phone: +1 415 754-9686

Website: www.amalgaminsights.com

Twitter: @AmalgamInsights

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