

EMA™ Advisory Note: Quest Foglight® Ranks as a Leader Among Vendors Offering User/Quality of Experience (QoE) Solutions



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This EMA Advisory Note is an excerpt from a recently published EMA report entitled *'An Adopter's Guide to User Experience Management: How to Pick the Right QoE Solution for You!'* (Adopter's Guide). The Adopter's Guide is specifically designed to help you select the right Quality of Experience (QoE) solution to improve the interactive experience of your application end users based primarily on your functional and business needs, your role, and the constituency (constituencies) you are looking to serve.

This excerpt focuses on one of the leading vendors in the report, Quest Software and their Foglight® solution. A further comparison of the capabilities of Foglight against other vendor solutions can be found both in the full Adopter's Guide report and online at the Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) [IT Management Solutions Center on User Experience Management](#).

Quality of Experience and User Experience Management

There are a lot of terms circulating across the market to describe how to set up metrics for evaluating application and network services as they impact the end-user experience. No doubt the most established is Quality of Service, or QoS, which has generally taken on a fairly technical, bandwidth-centric definition where it remains still valuable as a metric, but as such is far from summing up what really counts in the eyes of the end user. There are other terms like RUM, or "Real User Monitoring," that are technical, but at least focus on a series of monitoring technologies truly targeted at the "real user" or "end user" his or herself.

Then there's "QoE," or "Quality of Experience," which is not centered in technology, but in the flesh-and-blood experience of the user consuming IT services. This focus is a lot like Mean Opinion Score (MOS) was originally intended as it applied to telecommunications services. Like it or not, how your customers "feel" about your services is in the end going to be how they're going to vote with their pocketbook or their budget approvals.

The dimensions of understanding QoE can be as complex and differentiated as you might expect once you combine human "sensibilities" with a wide range of IT services. For some, mobility might be more important than super quick response time. Security may be a value and often is when critical records or financial transactions are at play. But as we'll see, the heart of the problem is focused around application or service response times, which now leads availability 65% to 63% as a QoE metric as per EMA's report "The Advent of QoE: Business and IT Priorities."

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EMA has found that prioritizing your QoE effort on the applications and environments most critical to your business is the number one recommendation from QoE adopters that EMA surveyed in its December 2008 research.

User Experience Management is another term that has stronger organizational ramifications, but has the same “experiential” focus as QoE. EMA has documented that, for instance, the Customer Experience Management team is the second-most likely organization to drive a QoE strategy after the line of business organization. The rise of QoE and User Experience Management is both heartening and dramatic. Eighty-four percent of business constituencies and 77% of IT constituencies believe that QoE is becoming “more important for their organization.” And an average of only two percent believes it is becoming less important.

About the Foglight® Solution from Quest

In our research comparisons of Quality of Service solution vendors, it became apparent that when choosing solutions that work best in Application-Centric, Application Lifecycle-Centric or Business Impact: End-User Productivity categories, Foglight is very highly ranked.

Application-centric QoE Solution Provider Category

To be rated as a leader in this category, vendor solutions must support both Web-based applications and traditional client/server applications across a wide variety of infrastructure environments. They also must have broad operational reach that addresses at least some network infrastructure and services requirements. In addition category leaders must have a clear and well-thought-out strategy when it comes to QoE and user experience management.

Not surprisingly, most IT adopters agree that application services are at the heart of QoE-related problems. In EMA research from Q4 2008, application-centric QoE edged out end-user productivity-related QoE as the top priority for 44% to 43% – both of which are addressed by leaders in this category. And in fact, many QoE initiatives center on either application performance and application development in dialog with key LOB, or e-business constituencies seeking to achieve specific business objectives.

Quest Software, Foglight® – LEADER

Quest Software offers a platform-like breadth across all application types for Web, non-Web, Web 2.0, and SOA, as well as network services such as VoIP and video conferencing – with the one exception of IP-TV. It offers a rich combination of insights into systems, applications and networks – the latter greatly enhanced through its 2007 acquisition of Magnum Technologies, which provides not only strong monitoring for network availability and performance, but capabilities for assessing service impact based on federated sources. These capabilities also help to make Quest distinctive in enabling what it calls its “operations CMDB” for cataloging multiple components across IT environments with dynamic service impact relationships.

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There is a lot to like about Quest from a QoE perspective, including support for both business and IT constituencies, with an in-depth eye to service impact, granular data on user experience, and one of the strongest triage and diagnostic capabilities in the industry. Quest offers a mix of synthetic and observed transaction monitoring capabilities, as well as both agent and agent less monitoring. When agents are required, Quest Foglight can leverage its discovery and dependency mapping to target and automate agent deployment. Foglight's root heritage was in-depth systems management in support of applications, and this heritage is visible in its robust capabilities for managing virtualized and non-virtualized systems and desktops. Foglight's network strengths include support for VPN and wireless, and some partial support for MPLS, mobile and content delivery networks.

Quest's Real User Performance Analysis provides metrics not only on response and availability, but on success rates, application utilization, and failure information based on clusters of user groups. Quest also offers a set of transactional replay options that can be used dynamically to support service impact and diagnostic requirements, or which can be stored and replayed to assess longer-term issues that may reflect application design issues such as navigability, as well as business-related issues based on group identities.

Integration with other solution sets is another Quest strength, as Foglight's design is service-oriented architecture-based, which in the words of the vendor, "enables a loosely coupled design...to assimilate new capabilities." Moreover, its infrastructure discovery and dependency mapping were originally designed to support heterogeneous management brands.

Application-Lifecycle-Centric QoE Solution Provider Category

Many of the QoE solutions in this market assessment include application developers, and to a lesser degree, Q/A Test, in their targeted audiences. However, most of these capabilities are focused on capturing production-level application performance that can be useful feedback in developing new applications. In contrast, all leaders and innovators mentioned in our report, 'An Adopter's Guide to User Experience Management: How to Pick the Right QoE Solution for You!', have distinct support for pre-deployment capabilities, and often defined reporting targeting application development and Q/A Test. These capabilities may come through synthetic/scripted testing, advanced analytics, and/or simulation-emulation capabilities. Getting QoE right "out-of-the-box" before deployment can be invaluable in optimizing customer loyalty and performance, as well as in minimizing embarrassment when critical SLAs or other business objectives are not met.

Quest, Foglight® – INNOVATOR

Quest supports Web, client/server, Web 2.0, SOA and VoIP and other networked services. It is a leader in application-centric QoE, and supports synthetic testing across the data center, at remote offices, at the end-user device, and across the network and network segments to capture transaction performance and application-to-application interdependencies prior to deployment. Quest also provides a complement of observed (passive) testing capabilities across these environments for historical base lining. Quest's model-based analytics, and its strengths in transactional replay, should offer valuable ongoing feedback for application developers, as well.

Business Impact: End-User Productivity Solution Provider Category

End-User Productivity is the number one driver for QoE and User Experience Management, garnering 23% of respondent votes from Q4 EMA research, ahead of business competitiveness and revenue (20%). There's good reason for this. Virtually all businesses, including e-business and e-commerce, depend on end-user productivity. This is true whether the end users are internal – for business competitiveness – or external, when a failure in end-user productivity can result in revenue loss and brand disloyalty.

On the other hand, detailed end-user productivity metrics tend to require very focused solution designs. Beyond responsiveness, availability and basic infrastructure and application performance, getting in-depth insights into actual user behaviors is far less broadly addressed by the QoE marketplace. Moreover, EMA has set the bar very high in this area for leaders and innovators, requiring an explicit, rather than implied, separation between “application performance” and “user performance,” and/or unique capabilities for interacting with end users to help them resolve performance issues through help desk personnel. In Q4 EMA research, for instance, the “ability to determine if the problem was caused/impacted by end-user behavior” ranked number one in business priorities for triage.

Quest, Foglight® – INNOVATOR

Foglight's Real User Performance Analysis capabilities capture response time and success rates for individual users. It also supports key end-user productivity metrics including proficiency, errors and efficiency from an overall time perspective. This observed capability is complemented by synthetic/scripted transactional replay which can also be valuable in understanding how and where business transactions are going awry when end-user productivity has become a problem.

About EMA

Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst and consulting firm dedicated to the IT management market. We provide IT vendors and enterprise IT professionals with objective insight into the real-world business value of technologies ranging from Virtualization to Security and Risk Management to ITSM and CMDB. Learn more about our research services, our free online IT Management Solutions Center, and our IT consulting offerings at: www.enterprisemanagement.com

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