
JBoss Enterprise Middleware, by Red Hat: Technical Support Services Leader

JBoss Enterprise Middleware Customer Support Study
September 2009



STRATEGY :: EXECUTION :: SUCCESS

WEB: www.velocitipartners.com

EMAIL: info@velocitipartners.com

Introduction

With security, performance, manageability, and scalability requirements for enterprise applications rapidly increasing, choosing the best middleware in today's competitive environment remains imperative. While factors including, scalability, ease-of-use, standards support, pricing, vendor viability, and future direction are of obvious importance, the often overlooked evaluation criterion remains the support, service, and relationship management factor.

Strategic organizations are increasingly looking for ways to lower the total cost of ownership (TCO) of their technology assets while improving the return on their investment. It is our view that expert customer support services can have a dramatic impact on both, and we are substantiated by the success of JBoss middleware technology.

Red Hat recognizes the importance of superior technical support services not only as a competitive differentiator, but also as a means to dramatically reduce ongoing costs. Unlike competitors, JBoss Enterprise Middleware, by Red Hat, views customer support as a key differentiator and have become very widely utilized middleware software based on this belief. To ensure that its technical support services continue to meet this objective, Red Hat Inc. sponsored this study of their support customers and their perceptions. Survey data suggests that Red Hat's customers recognize JBoss Enterprise Middleware as the Technical Support Services leader among JavaEE Application Server Platforms.

Methodology

Red Hat customers having used Red Hat Technical Support Services since July 2008 were contacted via e-mail or telephone and asked to complete a survey about their experience with the Red Hat support group and one other JavaEE application server vendor they are most familiar with. The majority of respondents also had experience with other middleware vendors' technical support services. Respondents were asked to subsequently rate Red Hat and a competing vendor on varying criteria.

171 Red Hat support users, a subset of the organization's customer base, participated in the study (40 via phone interview and 131 via email or web-based survey)

Participants were given a series of statements and asked to rank each by how much they agreed or disagreed based on the following scale:

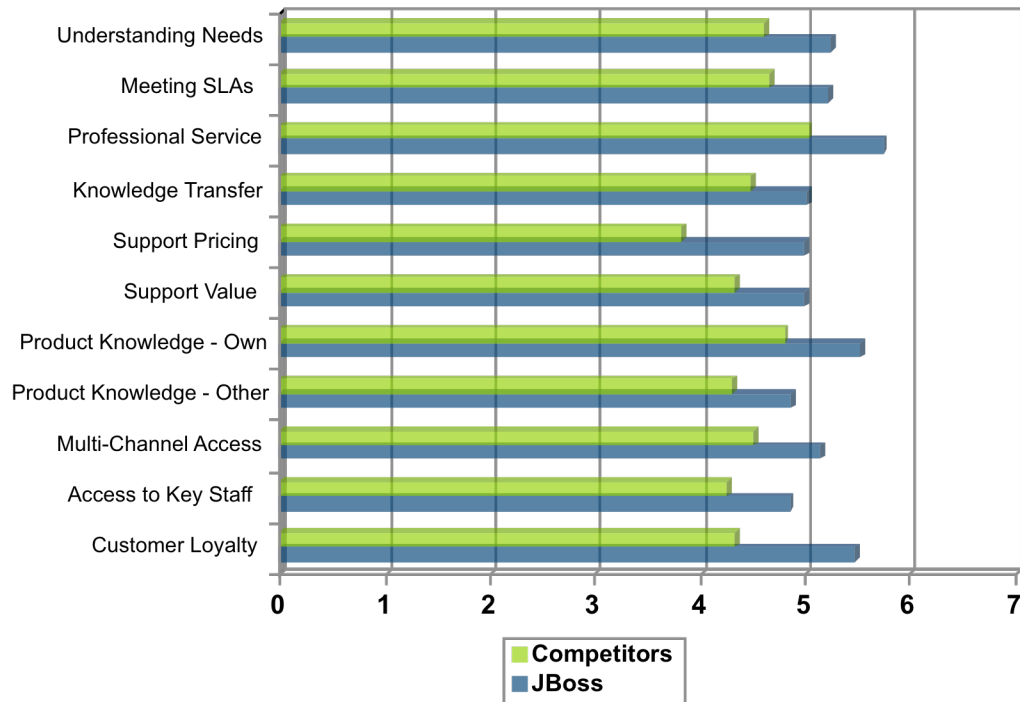
- 7. = Completely Agree
- 6. = Mostly Agree
- 5. = Somewhat Agree
- 4. = No Opinion
- 3. = Somewhat Disagree
- 2. = Mostly Disagree
- 1. = Completely Disagree

The following section discusses the aggregate rankings for each statement.

Executive Summary

To assess Red Hat’s support offering for JBoss Enterprise Middleware against its competitors, customers were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements. Red Hat’s exceptional performance in each category proves their continued performance and ability to deliver world-class support.

- The Vendor understands the needs of my business.
- The Vendor consistently meets or exceeds my Service Level Agreements.
- The Vendor’s staff provides service in a professional and courteous manner.
- The Vendor held a knowledge transfer with my team.
- The Vendor’s support pricing is competitive.
- The Vendor provides excellent value for my support services investment.
- The Vendor’s support staff knows their products well.
- The Vendor’s support team’s knowledge extends beyond just their products.
- The Vendor’s support team is easy to reach through multiple channels.
- I can easily get access to key people at the Vendor organization.
- It is very likely that I would recommend the Vendor to others.



The economic climate has led many public and private organizations to increasingly consider open source software to reduce their IT portfolio TCO. While many open source solutions offer an initial allure, long-term support and maintainability are often unknown variables.

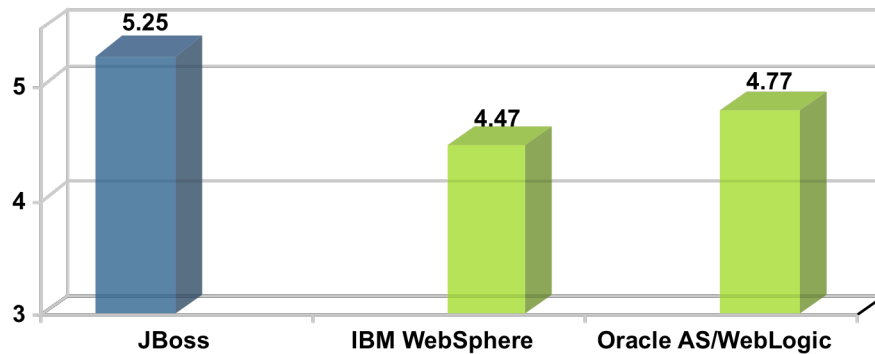
Red Hat's JBoss Enterprise Middleware client base recognizes its technical support service excellence as a key competitive differentiator. Not only does Red Hat surpass competing vendors, but it also received notably higher ratings in each categorization. Red Hat's consistent, remarkable performance is a testament to its ability to deliver a low TCO through indirect cost mitigation.

Survey Results

Understanding Needs

Technical support staff require a clear understanding of a customer’s IT environment, system specifications, and project goals in order to provide superior service. Rapid recall of these critical details helps in delivering a seamless, efficient support experience. Common pitfalls of an out of touch technical support organization are one-size-fit-all problem resolutions and mismanagement of customer expectations.

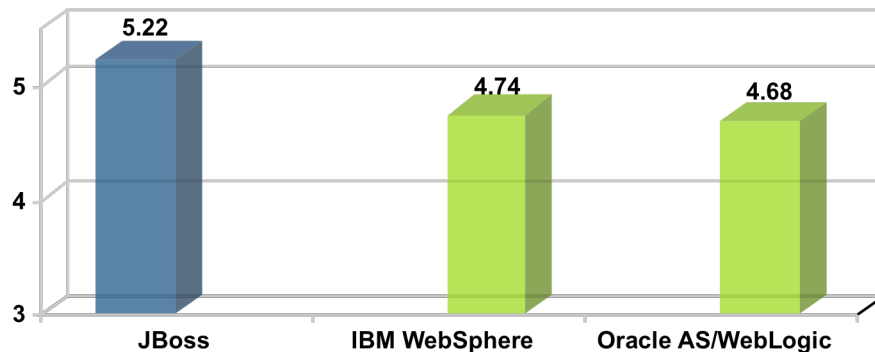
1. *The Vendor understands the needs of my business.*



Meeting SLAs

SLAs are a critical success factor in a sustainable vendor/customer technical support services relationship. However, customers can be shortchanged when vendors do not meet minimum SLA standards, even when the vendor faces financial repercussion. When comparing competitive SLAs it is important to consider a vendor’s track record in meeting or exceeding existing agreements.

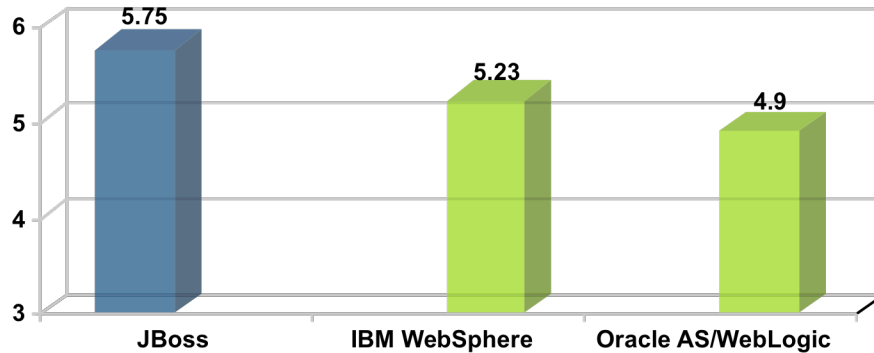
2. *The Vendor consistently meets or exceeds my service level agreements.*



Professional Service

Competitive pressures have degraded the quality of vendor/customer interactions. Leading organizations understand that professional service is not only fundamental to acquiring and retaining customers but also more cost efficient. Efficient service organizations consistently and unanimously uphold a service standard to achieve customer loyalty.

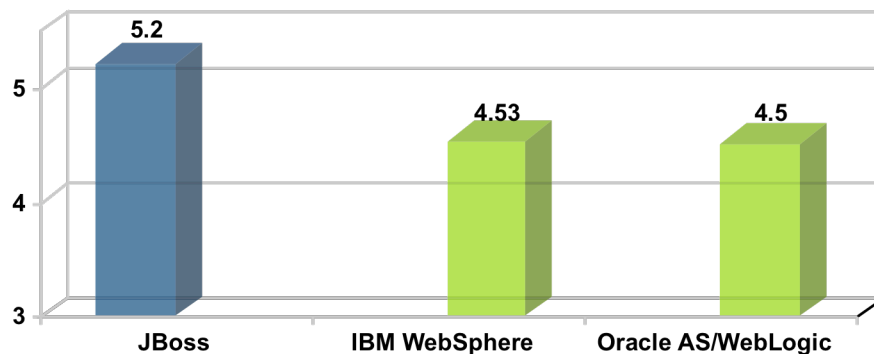
3. The Vendor's support staff provides service in a professional and courteous manner.



Knowledge Transfer

Each customer brings a unique set of requirements and goals to the relationship. While it takes a small commitment up-front, a knowledge transfer pays dividends in the long-term. Support organizations are better prepared to offer relevant solutions and avoid mismanagement of expectations.

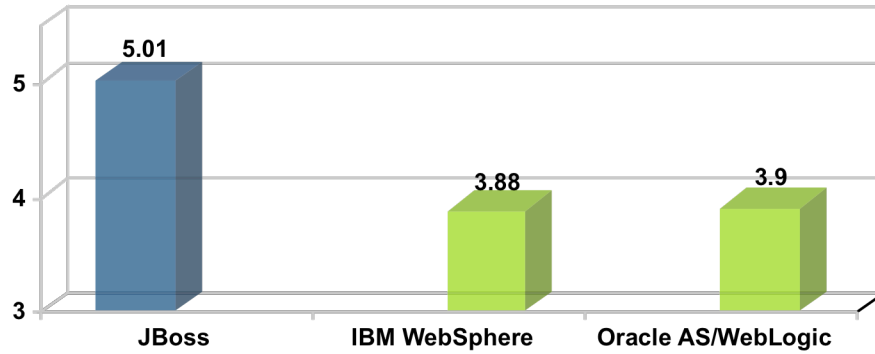
4. The Vendor held a knowledge transfer with my team.



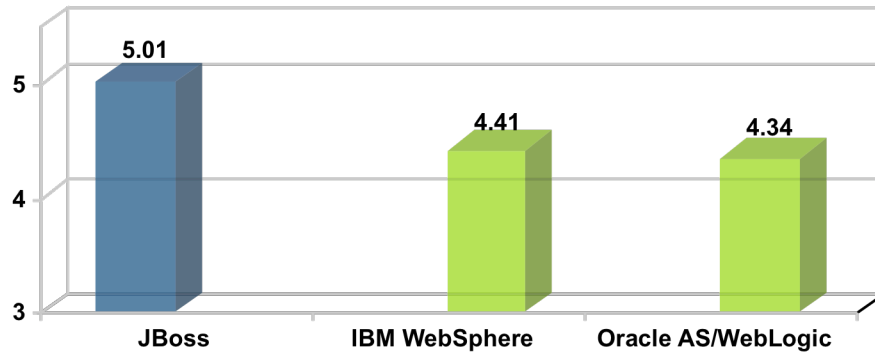
Support Pricing

Customers should not have to choose between a ‘quality’ and ‘low-price’ leader. An investment in technical support services should yield a competitive Return On Investment (ROI) by offering both competitive pricing and exceptional service. Superior technical support organizations recognize the importance of this and strive to create packages with compelling price-to-value ratios.

5. The Vendor’s support pricing is competitive.



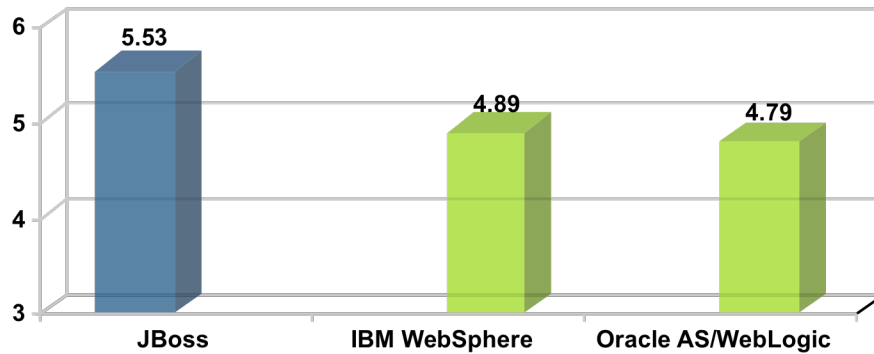
6. The Vendor provides excellent value for my support services investment.



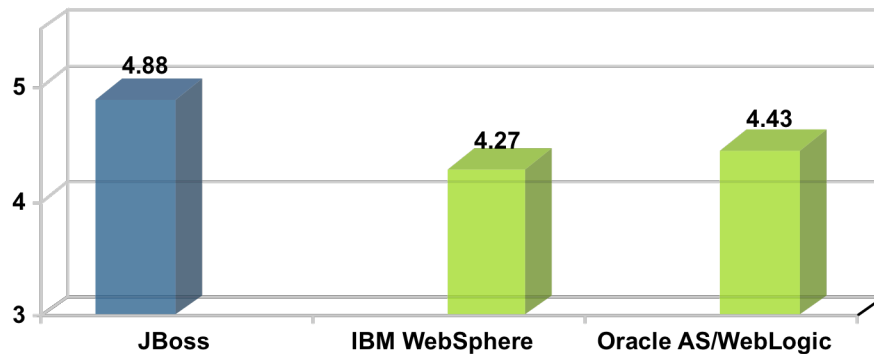
Product Knowledge

Frontline technical support staff spends the majority of their time troubleshooting common challenges. They are aware of ‘known’ technical issues and are armed with workarounds. However, when tougher issues arise they refer to knowledge bases and documentation. Beyond these resources technical support staff is often unable to diagnose deeper issues and identify root causes. Savvy organizations sufficiently train their frontline support staff to thoroughly understand the technology to address the most difficult problems without escalation or long turn-around times.

7. The Vendor’s support staff knows their product(s) well.



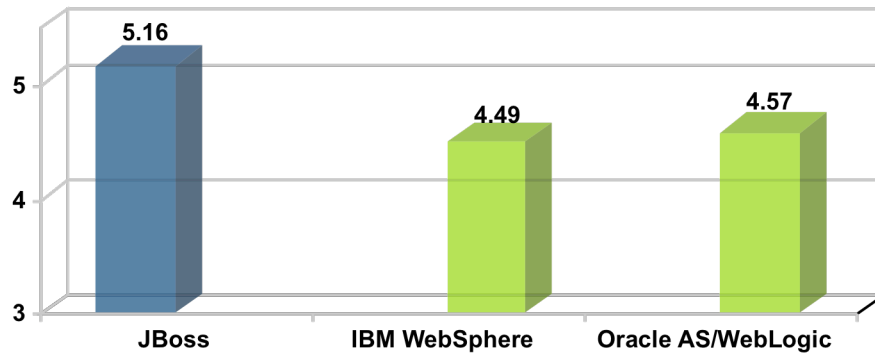
8. The Vendor’s support team’s knowledge extends beyond just their product(s).



Multi-Channel Access

The ability to reach a technical support organization through multiple channels has become a key criterion for many technology evaluators. But, it is also critical that inbound inquiries are appropriately prioritized. Unfortunately, customers are often left to escalating their own e-mail or web inquiries due to strained support teams and systems that relegate non-phone queries to the lowest priority. This approach is counterproductive for the vendor and customer alike.

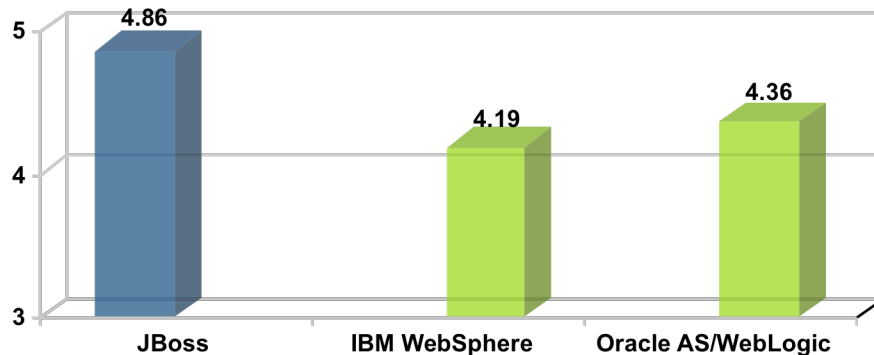
9. The Vendor's support team is easy to reach through multiple channels.



Access to Key Staff

Frontline staff is generally well equipped to handle the vast majority of support inquiries. However, there are instances where access to the right person at the right time is needed to keep mission critical applications running. Downtime can have a significant impact on the total cost of ownership and significantly damage vendor perception. A trusted vendor escalates issues quickly to help ensure expedient resolution.

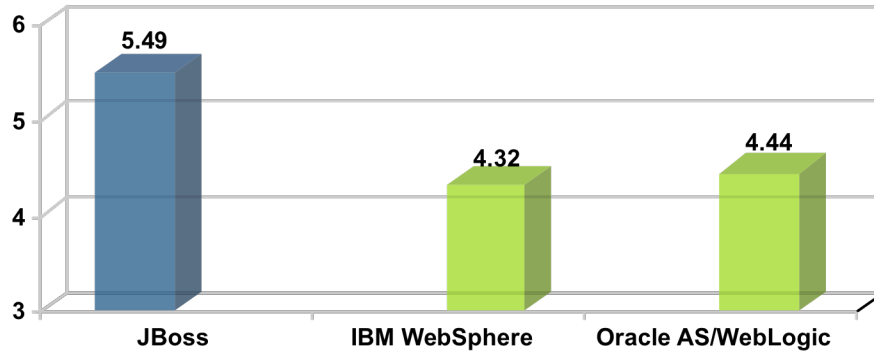
10. I can easily get access to key people at the Vendor.



Customer Loyalty

Customers often remain loyal to a vendor despite persistent challenges. After all, migration can be costly and time consuming. A more accurate assessment of loyalty is the customer's likelihood to recommend the vendors to others. A high level of loyalty underscores continued product and service excellence.

11. *It is very likely that I would recommend the Vendor to others.*



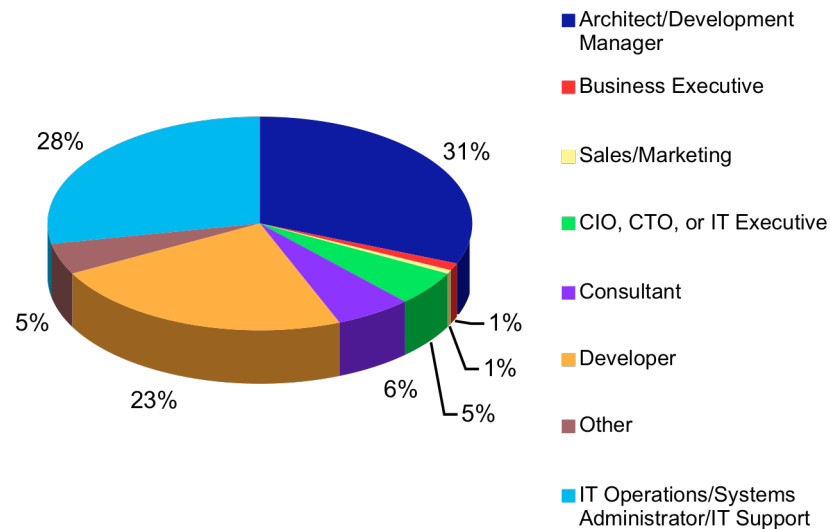
Summary

Red Hat's mission to provide expert technical support services as a differentiator for JBoss Enterprise Middleware is clearly being acknowledged by its client base. This may not come as a surprise since many know the success of the division is significantly dependent on the value its customer support services bring. What may be surprising is the comprehensive nature by which their service is unsurpassed. Once again, every category that was evaluated resulted in Red Hat rating higher than the competition. More importantly, Red Hat's performance has yielded unprecedented customer loyalty as evidenced by its favorable quantitative loyalty rating. Loyalty indexes remain one of the most valuable tools in predicting future growth. As a result, Red Hat's JBoss Enterprise Middleware future growth potential remains very robust.

As organizations increasingly turn to open source software to lower their total cost of ownership of IT, Red Hat meets their needs with a service organization dedicated to delivering increased savings with faster, more accurate, and more valuable support services. Based on the results of this study, it is our belief that JBoss Enterprise Middleware subscription services from Red Hat should be seen as a strategic lever to increase benefits and decrease costs. Objective evidence supporting Red Hat's industry-leading performance may also be compelling enough to encourage a reexamination of current enterprise middleware investments and significantly impact current vendor evaluation processes.

About the Study Respondents

Velociti Partners randomly sampled 171 Red Hat Inc. Technical Support users. Only users with recent experiences with Red Hat support services were asked to participate in the study. Support users since June 2008 were invited to participate.



The following is a breakdown of the JavaEE Application Servers participants had experience with:

- JBoss – 171
- IBM WebSphere – 40
- Oracle Application Server or WebLogic – 44

About Velociti Partners, Inc.

Velociti Partners is a boutique management consulting and strategic research organization for technology enterprises. Based in Walnut Creek, CA, Velociti Partners provides our clients with strategic services to aid growth, financial performance, and overall success. Velociti principals and senior consultants each have several years of operational experience with leading technology firms and start-up ventures and play active roles in all client engagements. We are a group of tightly knit, talented individuals that maintain a corporate culture of integrity, continual education, and achievement. Above all, we are passionate about delivering results.

Velociti Partners, Inc.
712 Bancroft Road Suite #124
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Telephone: +1-866-952-9995
Web: www.velocitipartners.com
Email: info@velocitipartners.com



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