

Top Five Reasons to Choose SharePlex® Over Oracle GoldenGate

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Abstract

This business brief explores the top five reasons to choose SharePlex® over Oracle GoldenGate, a competing data replication solution for your Oracle database environment.

Introduction

There are several data replication solutions for your Oracle databases: Oracle's Active Data Guard and GoldenGate, Quest's SharePlex for Oracle, IBM's InfoSphere Change Data Capture, and, of course, other vendors have solutions as well. On the surface, these may seem similar in terms of capabilities. But deeper inspection reveals critical differences that you should consider when choosing a solution for your Oracle database environment.

SharePlex for Oracle

SharePlex for Oracle is a simple, low-cost, ZeroIMPACT™, business-critical data replication solution for Oracle databases. Since 1997, this technology has simplified data replication for customers in varying industries worldwide, including many Fortune 500 companies. It decreases or eliminates downtime and minimizes or eliminates risk when replicating multiple copies of Oracle data for special purposes to meet your business needs, including:

- High availability/disaster recovery
- Migrations, patches, and upgrades
- Operational reporting, archiving, or data warehousing
- Data distribution/distributed processing
- Centralized reporting or consolidation
- Load balancing
- Cascading using intermediary systems
- RAC alternative for scalability

Both SharePlex and Oracle GoldenGate offer near-zero downtime, real-time continuous availability, and minimal overhead. So you may be wondering: Why should I choose SharePlex? What follows are the top five reasons.

Top Five Reasons to Choose SharePlex

SharePlex is superior to Oracle GoldenGate in many areas. Aside from simplistic manageability, proven reliability, and application transparency, SharePlex provides quality of investment. Our case studies prove that SharePlex delivers unrivaled performance, scalability, data accuracy, flexibility, and support. Let's examine how well SharePlex satisfies some principal business objectives in terms of:

1. Simplicity
2. Support
3. Scalability
4. Productivity
5. Cost

Reason One: Simplicity

There is a common misconception that data replication has to be complex. This myth is perpetuated by Oracle GoldenGate, which requires add-ons that cost extra to complete its solution stack and achieve full functionality. This is not the case with SharePlex.

SharePlex simplifies data replication in four key areas:

1. Trial download
2. Learning videos and forums
3. Product design
4. Professional services

First, SharePlex is available via a free online trial download (www.quest.com/shareplex). You can install the trial, enter the license key, and it's ready to go in just 15 minutes.

Second, SharePlex has a helpful online community (<http://www.quest.com/community-shareplex>), which contains quick tutorials and forums. The video tutorials are only five to ten minutes long and feature walk-throughs on getting started, using sync, compare-and-repair, monitoring, and partitioning features. The forums offer best practices from the experts, and the ability to share experiences with peers and access additional educational materials. This online resource gets users up and running faster than Oracle GoldenGate.

Third, the unique design of SharePlex provides setup in just one command line with two quick steps: create the configuration file and activate it. SharePlex also streamlines day-to-day operations since it automatically creates and syncs all the queues and processes. There is no need to set up procedures and turn on pieces manually, saving you time. Routine tasks, such as resync of a table, are simplified since SharePlex determines where to start the copy and automatically verifies integrity while posting to locate potential out of syncs between the source and target systems. Other built-in features, including reconcile, flush, and compare-and-repair, ensure that the source and target are in sync and show you how to rectify any problems. These capabilities are not available with Oracle GoldenGate or they cost extra.

Finally, SharePlex professional services are far less costly, and more streamlined, than those for Oracle GoldenGate. Many consultants advertise offerings to help customers follow best practices for implementing Oracle GoldenGate. There's a reason for this: GoldenGate's complexity necessitates outside expertise. Take, for example, Oracle's lack of compare-and-repair functionality, which forces customers to experience downtime when resynching a corrupted database or table; this puts the customer's business at serious risk and often requires additional service costs from Oracle or third-party consultants – on top of increased operational expenses. Just compare a Google search for GoldenGate consultants against one for SharePlex consultants. The extremely limited results for third-party professional services for SharePlex prove how much safer and easier SharePlex is to use. Simplicity rules over complexity every time.

Reason Two: Support

Data replication solutions are typically used for high availability and critical application availability needs, so uptime and turnaround time are important factors to consider. And depending on the nuances of your environment, you may require a higher level of support to get answers quickly and reduce downtime. Your solution should also be user-friendly, minimizing staff training.

Typically, many large technology companies must support thousands of customers who are running a slew of solutions. The support is often level-one from the outset of every call and is provided by less experienced generalist support staff. This kind of inefficient and time-consuming customer service has become routine practice at many IT companies and hardly provides an optimal customer service experience.

SharePlex offers unmatched support, consistently earning a 93-96 percent customer-satisfaction rating in post-support surveys. The SharePlex technical support team was a key contributor to Quest Software winning the MarketTools ACE (Achievement in Customer Excellence) award in 2011 and 2012. The SharePlex support team's availability and technical expertise ensures timely resolution of business-critical issues, winning the hearts of customers who rely on 24-hour data availability.

SharePlex comes with one year of around-the-clock business-critical support, which is included at no extra charge. Customer service is provided by highly skilled support engineers, each with five or more years of SharePlex experience. So customer issues are often resolved within the first support call – saving you time.

SharePlex customers also have health checks available to them. The health check tool analyzes your SharePlex environment and provides a report on recommendations for improvements to help you get the most from your investment.

Reason Three: Scalability

As data volumes grow, database infrastructures must scale to accommodate the load. Typically, scalability can be achieved vertically by moving to a bigger server, or horizontally with Oracle Real Application Clusters (RAC) or a peer-to-peer (active-active) replication solution, which balances the application and user load across multiple database servers.

Unlike Oracle GoldenGate, which may require users to upgrade to RAC or Enterprise Edition with add-on packs, SharePlex offers flexible scalability options to meet different needs, without increasing cost, including:

1. Running on Linux and low-cost servers with Oracle Standard Edition
2. Load balancing between multiple databases without the overhead, limitations, and costs of RAC
3. RAC environments using any Oracle version (Standard Edition or Enterprise Edition) with an active-active replication setup
4. Elimination of the RAC Cluster software that increases I/O latency with added RAC Cluster wait time

With SharePlex, you can scale as much or as little as you need to with any of these options, depending on your resources and availability requirements.

Reason Four: Productivity

SharePlex's design, trial download, and tutorials make it so simple to set up and operate that you won't need to add staff resources to use and maintain it. In fact, SharePlex increases staff productivity.

Dr. Rama Tata, a SharePlex customer and applications systems analyst for the Orange County, Fla., Supervisor of Elections had this to say about it, "In addition to eliminating downtime, SharePlex replication saves valuable IT staff time. While three staffers were previously required for the maintenance process, now just one of them can apply the patches and perform all the other maintenance. Moreover, maintenance can occur whenever necessary, since one database can be brought down without impacting the availability of applications."

Pedro Nel Herrera, a SharePlex customer and IT Manager at Codesa, also saw productivity improvements at his organization and stated, "For platform changes – hardware, operating system, database version, etc. – we are saving 80 percent of our staff time, and the operational savings benefits can be quantified at approximately \$85,000 (U.S.) per year."

Our SharePlex-to-the-Cloud program offers additional cost savings, as third-party managed service providers (MSPs) can reduce staffing costs associated with maintaining a complex environment. SharePlex reduces the costs of IT management and delivers a high ROI, making the MSP solution more affordable and cost-effective.

Additionally, SharePlex's core features provide significant time savings. Functionalities such as compare-and-repair, a built-in fail-back recovery mechanism, and in-flight data integrity checks find and fix data anomalies, so you don't have to make manual adjustments. Oracle GoldenGate offers no such features, so it's your responsibility to find discrepancies and determine the accuracy of data, which wastes time unnecessarily.

Here's a brief overview of SharePlex's key out-of-the-box features:

In-Flight Data Integrity and Instantiation – Provides built-in before-and-after image data comparisons at the transaction level that allow for immediate detection of a data anomaly. Ensures integrity of the data and check-point by making sure all open transactions are immediately and appropriately handled, so the replica copy is guaranteed accurate. It also offers error handling that's turned on by default to identify errors in replication. Early alerts to discrepancies provide data integrity and accuracy. Our transactions are almost immediately on the target and may be applied or rolled back in the event of a failure or loss of network connection, the most common replication interruption. Oracle GoldenGate transactions are stuck in trail files on the source database that could lead to lost transactions in the event of an outage or could consequently cause network spikes during batch transmissions, creating greater risk.

Compare and Repair – Comes with the compare-and-repair utilities that can be used to ensure integrity in ALL use cases, a helpful feature for reducing mean-time-to-repair. SharePlex reduces or eliminates the downtime associated with bringing applications offline in the event data is compromised. Data is repaired in-line, saving enormous time and preventing risk to the business. While Oracle GoldenGate indicates the only benefit is in master-to-master replication, we believe this is incorrect, since corruption in replication can happen for all replica databases as in operational reporting. Most of the time, fixing a few transactions to ensure reporting accuracy is faster than a full rebuild of the corrupted database. Oracle GoldenGate, by default, suppresses data errors (error handling is OFF). However, they provide a very expensive add-on (more than \$100K for two to four CPUs). Veridata detects an out-of-synch condition only. It has no way to repair the corrupted data. Oracle GoldenGate requires the customer to manually repair the corrupted data, which is a complex and time-consuming process that ultimately requires downtime and/or complete re-instantiation.

Migration Failback – Provides a migration-rollback recovery mechanism that allows replication from the new version of Oracle back to the older version. This safeguards your data if the application does not work correctly after the migration, regardless of how much work users have done since the migration. It enables failback to the older version with no loss of user data.

Replication Monitor GUI – Allows you to execute control commands on replication processes, monitor and optimize performance, and diagnose database replication problems before they cause disruptions or downtime.

Reason Five: Cost

When it comes to evaluating IT solutions, cost is usually at the top of the criteria list. In fact, many organizations have incorporated lower-cost platforms like Oracle Standard Edition into their environments to save on infrastructure costs. With this in mind, SharePlex is available in two different offerings: SharePlex for Oracle Enterprise Edition and SharePlex for Oracle Standard Edition. These options reduce costs since you aren't forced to upgrade your database infrastructure like you must with Oracle GoldenGate. In fact, for Oracle Enterprise Edition, SharePlex is competitively priced at *half* the cost of GoldenGate. And special SharePlex pricing for Oracle Standard Edition can save customers as much as 80 percent compared to GoldenGate.

In addition to Oracle Enterprise and Oracle Standard Edition, SharePlex supports multiple Oracle versions, including 8i through 11gR2, RAC, and Exadata. It also supports diverse server platforms, including AIX, HP-UX, Solaris, Linux, and Windows. SharePlex is platform agnostic, so again, there are no upgrade costs, which lowers overall operational expenses.

The SharePlex solution comes licensed with all the tools required for replication, including data compare-and-repair, synchronization, and an intuitive graphical interface for managing and monitoring replication activity – all for one low price. You don't have to buy extra add-on packs or options like you do with GoldenGate.

SharePlex is available in a limited license as well. This flexible licensing option allows you to:

- Drive down reoccurring operational costs to switch operating systems or database editions
- Deploy the most current Oracle database or application release
- Apply Oracle database and application patches
- Deploy a short-term test environment project

So if you only need a data replication solution for a short-term project, you have the option of purchasing a three, six, nine, or twelve month license. You are not forced to purchase a one-year license like you are with GoldenGate. This flexibility allows you to support routine or critical database maintenance while staying within your budget.

Conclusion

SharePlex and Oracle GoldenGate share some surface-level similarities. But a deeper investigation reveals that SharePlex is a far superior and more comprehensive solution, providing unmatched simplicity, support, scalability, and productivity – at a much lower price. And it's not just more affordable upfront; it also continually keeps operational and service costs lower than GoldenGate does, delivering a higher ROI right away that only grows over time. When it comes to data replication solutions, it's clear that SharePlex is the most powerful and cost-effective choice on the market.

About the Author

Tom Chu is the product manager for SharePlex and has been with Quest for more than 15 years. Since the product's inception in 1997, Tom has supported SharePlex in a variety of roles, including technical support, development, and product management.

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