SWOT Assessment: Alfresco, Alfresco One, v5.0

Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
Summary

Catalyst

When it comes to enterprise content management (ECM) there is no one size fits all. Many ECM platforms have become too big and cumbersome, resulting in vendors splitting their portfolios into more manageable chunks that provide a solution-based approach to different areas of ECM. This is benefiting smaller vendors such as open source Alfresco, which is winning business over the larger vendors when organizations consolidate from multiple ECM systems to a single platform, because of the extensive capabilities it offers, and the fact that it is seen to be offering value for money. Although Alfresco does not play in as many technology areas as some of the larger ECM vendors, open standards make it easier to bolt on additional products if organizations require functionality in areas in which Alfresco does not have capabilities.

Key messages

- Alfresco is a leading open source ECM vendor that provides extensive document management, collaboration, and case management capabilities within its portfolio of ECM technologies.
- Alfresco's metadata models provide the facets on which search results can be filtered, which improves the accuracy of searches.
- Extensive collaboration features are provided, which enable team working. Features include wikis, blogs, discussion threads, data lists, shared calendars, and links.
- Alfresco One does not include functionality in as many technology areas as the platforms from the largest ECM platform vendors, but this means that organizations do not implement features they will never require.

Ovum view

Alfresco is a leading open source ECM vendor. In line with other ECM vendors, it is changing its focus to become more solution oriented. This is an important move as many organizations do not know what technologies they require to address specific content-related issues, and they risk implementing the platform with the most comprehensive capabilities without realizing that they will never use a large proportion of the capabilities. This solutions-based approach will benefit Alfresco as it does not have capabilities in some of the extended areas, such as customer communications, that some of the larger vendors have. Because vendors are separating out some of their technologies and offering them as solutions, it is much easier for organizations to select solutions from a range of vendors to create their own best-of-breed ECM system, and this should provide Alfresco with additional opportunities. Support for content management interoperability services (CMIS) enables Alfresco One to easily integrate with content management products from other vendors.
Recommendations for enterprises

Why consider Alfresco One?

Alfresco is currently picking up a high number of customers that are consolidating from several ECM platforms to a single system. The product is certainly well suited to this; it has extensive core capabilities, including document management and collaboration, records management, business process management (BPM), and advanced search capabilities. Alfresco also caters to the increasing number of organizations that are deploying cloud solutions. Alfresco One can run on-premise, in the cloud, or as a hybrid model, which will appeal to many organizations. As an open source solution it provides an open standards-based, flexible, transparent, and cost-effective system for organizations looking to implement ECM.

SWOT analysis

Strengths

Alfresco One does not require a software installation on the end user's device

Alfresco One has been designed for ease of use. Unlike many ECM systems, its browser-based UI and server-side components for Microsoft Office integration do not require an installation on users' PCs or devices to use the product. This simplifies the setup of the system. Customization allows each user to have their own dashboard displaying the features and functions they are permitted to access.

Extensive metadata support improves the search capability

Alfresco One includes flexible out-of-the-box metadata models, which can also be extended to suit customer-specific use cases. Metadata can be automatically extracted from content as it is uploaded. Search results can be filtered on facets, which are based on context and are formed from the metadata models. Administrators are able to define when facets are displayed and what properties users are allowed to filter on.

Core collaboration capabilities aids team working

Alfresco's "collaboration site" feature provides a collaborative environment that includes membership management, user invitation, site roles, activity feeds, and content-level security. Users are able to create and participate in wikis, blogs, discussion threads, and work with data lists. Social features, such as follow, "like", favorite, and comment, can all be customized. In addition, shared calendars are available. Each site has a configurable dashboard that can be tailored by team members and enhanced with several, extensible "Dashlets." Collaboration applications supported include document management, projects, teams, and communities.

Weaknesses

Information rights management (IRM) is not included in the portfolio

Alfresco One does not include IRM. Organizations are becoming increasingly concerned about the security of content, particularly as employees are turning to consumer-grade file sync and share products in growing numbers to download corporate content to mobile devices. IRM can prevent
users from taking actions such as printing, forwarding, editing, annotating, or copying a document. Alfresco uses third parties for IRM capabilities, which can be built upon the core Alfresco One platform.

**Alfresco no longer includes web content management in its portfolio**

Web content management is no longer included in the Alfresco One portfolio. Third-party products such as Crafter provide web content management capabilities.

**Opportunities**

**Alfresco can benefit from organizations consolidating their ECM systems**

An opportunity for Alfresco lies in the consolidation of ECM platforms that many organizations are undertaking. Continuing mergers and acquisitions as well as the fact that many ECM systems were implemented at a departmental level is providing a lucrative market for ECM vendors to replace multiple ECM platforms with a single system.

**Alfresco's cloud offering exploits the growing demand for hosted systems**

The market for ECM delivered via the cloud is growing and Alfresco is well positioned to exploit this demand. Its cloud solution is already up and running. Organizations can run Alfresco One fully in the cloud or as a hybrid model where sensitive content stays on-premise, and less critical content is pushed to the cloud.

**Alfresco can provide a best-of-breed approach**

With support for multiple open standards, including CMIS, CIFS, WebDAV, FTP, IMAP, SMTP, and JMX, and the easy integration of content management products from third-party vendors, aspects of Alfresco can be bolted on to other ECM platforms to provide best-of-breed products. Alternatively, products from other content management vendors can be added to Alfresco to provide additional capabilities.

**Threats**

**Alfresco competes with the largest ECM platform vendors**

Alfresco faces competition from entrenched ECM platform vendors such as EMC, IBM, Oracle, and OpenText, which offer aggressive pricing to maintain their maintenance and support contracts.

**Alfresco is dependent on customers buying the commercial version of the product**

A threat for any open source vendor is that its revenue stream dries up because its product becomes so easy to implement and use that organizations no longer feel the need to buy additional commercial products (content encryption, transformation server, records management, clustering, etc.) or additional support and maintenance.
Data sheet

Key facts about the solution

Table 1: Data sheet: Alfresco

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<td>Routes to market</td>
<td>Support sold directly and by partners</td>
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Source: Ovum

Appendix

Methodology

Ovum SWOT Assessments are independent reviews carried out using Ovum’s evaluation model for the relevant technology area, supported by conversations with vendors, users, and service providers of the solution concerned, and in-depth secondary research.

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We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum’s consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum’s consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at consulting@ovum.com.

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