



SmartBear White Papers

ALM Tools

All in One Solutions versus Point Solutions

This document evaluates the pros and cons of all-in-one ALM solutions versus point-solutions.

Narrative

When considering an Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) solution, you have two options:

- **All in One Solutions** – A solution that provides all the core features needed by your software project management solution (management of projects, requirements, test cases and defects) with a single tool.
- **Point Solutions** – These are dedicated solutions for each piece of the ALM offering (a project management solution, a requirements management solution, etc.).

This whitepaper discusses the trade-offs between these two different approaches.

Advantages of All in One Solutions

There are many advantages of an All in One Solution:

Costs

Overall, All in One Solutions (All-in-1) will normally be more cost effective:

- **Initial Costs** - All-in-1 normally comes with a single price per license and if the license is a concurrent license it can be very advantageous. With point solutions, each solution comes with its own licensing requirements (some named licenses and some concurrent licenses) and because they are different vendors, the initial costs can be dramatically greater with point solutions.
- **Maintenance Costs** - All-in-1 has a single annual maintenance fee whereas point solutions each have their own annual maintenance fee, the ongoing costs can be dramatically greater with point solutions.
- **Training Costs** - A well designed All-in-1 solution will have screens that work the same for all areas of the software (requirements, test cases, defects, etc.) while point solutions each have a different way of working with the solution. With All-in-1 solutions, you can do training once while with point solutions you will have to train several times with each product and it will take the attendees longer to retain how to use the features of point solutions because each one works differently. Likewise, if your organization creates User Guides for the end solution (that illustrates specific ways you use the features based on your configuration of the tool), the User Guide work is more time consuming and costly when being developed for different point solutions. Training new employees and users take more time and costs for point solutions than for All-in-1 solutions.
- **Upgrade Costs** – When implementing new releases of your chosen solution, it takes time to install, configure and beta test the new release. This is significantly less costly when releases are done with a single solution than with point solutions because point solutions will have different release dates and will involve more administrative training to understand how to install a variety of point solutions.
- **Professional Services Costs** – As you need custom features and professional services from your ALM provider, it is more costly via several vendors than if you deal with a single vendor. Each

vendor will have their own Professional Service rates and release schedules for implementation of professional services. Costs will be reduced with fewer releases and a single vendor with a consistent professional services rate.

- **Development Costs** – Both All-in-1 and Point Solutions normally have APIs that allow you to extend their offerings. Learning each API can be time consuming and costly. Costs can be dramatically smaller with an All-in-1 solution because it is a single API to learn, taking less person hours to master and deploy changes.
- **Integration Costs** – Point solutions require significant effort and costs to ensure that the different solutions integrate with each other to provide traceability and cross tool reporting. These costs are higher because of different APIs to contend with and the fact that the tools have their own release cycles. Imagine one vendor implementing a new release of their software that breaks any customizations created via custom integrations – this is magnified by the number of different solutions you own since each is on their own release schedule.
- **Reporting Costs** – With point solutions, you normally have to learn how to use custom reporting solutions within each tool and it can be costly to train your resources on each tool. With All-in-1 solutions, the reporting engine is the same and can be used to report across artifacts and projects using a single technique. Strategic reports that cross artifacts can also save money because it can spot trends that can improve team collaboration and reduce project slippage and costs associated with that.

Integrated Features

All in One Solutions provide a number of advantages because of the fact that they are tightly integrated:

- **User Setup and Security** – Single user setup and password management. With point solutions, you must keep a number of different solutions set up with separate security rules. Each time you add a user, you must add them to multiple systems and keeping their passwords in sync can be problematic (unless each tool has integrations with Active Directory).
- **Project Setup** - All-in-1 solutions have a much quicker project setup and keeping it configured is easy since it is a single tool. With point solutions, you must learn how to configure each product and must go to each tool when you need to make project configuration changes.
- **Traceability** - All-in-1 solutions have much tighter traceability between artifacts. For example, an All-in-1 solution allows you to create a requirement, tie it to test cases, fail test cases and create defects automatically, tie defects back to the requirement, etc. With point solutions, you lose this level of cohesion unless you write integrators that provide this level of traceability.
- **Dashboards and Reporting** – All-in-1 solutions allow reporting across all artifacts because they physically reside in the same database while point solutions are in separate database (sometimes in different types of databases), so cross artifact reporting because very unwieldy and costly with point solutions. Cross project reporting is much easier with All-in-1 solutions than with point solutions because data can easily be aggregated across projects.
- **Ease of Use** – Working in a single product is much easier than having to pop in and out of different tools to complete tasks demanded by your job.

Advantages of Point Solutions

The advantage of point solutions:

- **Feature Set** – Point solutions may provide individual features that more closely meet your specific needs.
- **Individual Costs** – Point solutions can vary widely in costs so you can normally shop around to find good buys. This advantage can be lost however when integrating each point solution with other point solutions.

Conclusion

In most cases, we believe an All in One Solution provides the best overall value and utility versus point solutions because startup and recurring costs are normally less, features are better integrated, and reporting is much more seamless and robust.