

# Dell Software Foglight APM 5.9: Introducing Big Data Repository/Reporting Supporting Web Analytics and User-Centric APM

## Abstract

On May 28, 2013, Dell Software Group announced the release of Foglight™ Application Performance Monitoring (APM) 5.9. The latest Foglight release combines deep visibility to transaction flows and User Experience with a variety of new product capabilities that capitalize on innovative Big Data technology. Focused on developing a customer-centric APM perspective, Foglight 5.9 introduces new “Transaction DNA” technology to the marketplace, along with a Transaction Trace repository that captures and stores user interactions with Web applications. The Big Data approach supports reporting from the user, transaction, and Web analytics perspectives.

These new capabilities solidly position Foglight as a leading player in today’s APM market. They also deliver a foundation for increasingly business-focused decision support in future releases, a stated goal of Foglight’s product management team.

This ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) Impact Brief details the new capabilities and positions this release within a broader industry APM story.

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## Background and Context for this Announcement

Dell Software’s Foglight solution was a key asset acquired with Quest Software in 2012. Foglight was Quest’s central dashboard for both domain-specific and application-focused monitoring. It was totally re-engineered in the 2006–2007 timeframe as a modular solution and central repository featuring an analytics and processing core with multiple snap-in components.

In the ensuing timeframe, this modular architecture has enabled Foglight to adapt to industry disruptors in the security, mobile, and Cloud monitoring spaces far more nimbly than many competitors. Today, with the release of Foglight APM 5.9, the central repository is undergoing a seamless transition towards Big Data technologies and analytics. This is an emerging hallmark of leading-edge APM solutions and one that is not yet available in the bulk of the APM solutions on the market today.

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Foglight has a strong and satisfied customer base, particularly in the mid-market. Traditionally focused on tech-savvy IT practitioners, with this release Foglight’s intended customer base has evolved as well. In addition to enhancing “traditional” APM capabilities, it also targets Line Of Business (LOB) IT.

Dell’s tagline for the release is “a customer-centric approach to Application Performance Monitoring, equipping IT Application Support, IT Operations, Development and the business with answers, not just data.” In other words, in contrast to competing APM solutions, most of which focus on technical metrics, Foglight 5.9 also delivers useful information about users, user actions, and application usability.

## Dell Software Foglight APM 5.9

With the release of Foglight APM 5.9, Dell has positioned the transaction as the primary point of interaction and visibility. With this in mind, a new Big Data repository and related analytics store and analyze disparate data from multiple sources, consolidating it into a common service model of transaction execution. While this approach enables in-depth coverage of both APM and business-related metrics, Dell indicates that the product will continue to evolve towards increasingly business-centric reporting over time.

New features and capabilities fall into three main categories: the Big Data repository and analytics, transaction- and user-centric reporting, and simplification of deployment and usage. The release includes:

- “*Transaction DNA*” technology, which relies on the Big Data capabilities to provide detailed and automated insight into transaction paths and performance. Via a synthesis of network-based Real User Monitoring (RUM) and browser-based AJAX monitoring, Foglight 5.9 “captures everything, because often the problem is in the periphery.”<sup>1</sup> A key advantage over other APM solutions is the ability to de-duplicate static transaction-related information. The result is the ability to collect and store massive amounts of data at the levels of scale necessary for large companies with thousands of endpoints.

A related benefit is that analysis can be done from both the transaction and the user perspectives. Detailed reporting related to the transaction itself is provided out of the box. It includes identification of the user or users impacted by a problem, along with application, infrastructure, and third-party dependencies. This is a significant benefit which helps automate prioritization of triage and remediation tasks. Currently a repository for primarily IT-centric metrics, the Big Data repository and analytics will support increasingly business-centric types of data analysis in future releases.

- *Multi-Dimensional User Experience*: In addition to transaction-centric analysis, Foglight 5.9 adds significant depth to user experience reporting. Foglight User Experience analyzes both network and browser metrics in the context of the transaction. This context-driven approach is a key differentiator and new in Foglight 5.9. For example, transactions can be associated with users, giving insight into questions such as “how many users are impacted?” or “what caused the user’s problem with this transaction?”

Dell’s new “Transaction Funnel” (see Figure 1) tracks transaction paths and completion rates. Foglight customers can define and search on any aspect of a transaction, including business-focused items such as shopping cart content. Or the entire session can be analyzed to determine why and when the customer exited the transaction. As an example, Foglight 5.9 analytics could search for common threads among 400 hypothetical customers who did not complete a given transaction.

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<sup>1</sup> Per a Dell spokesperson

# Funnel analysis of completion rates

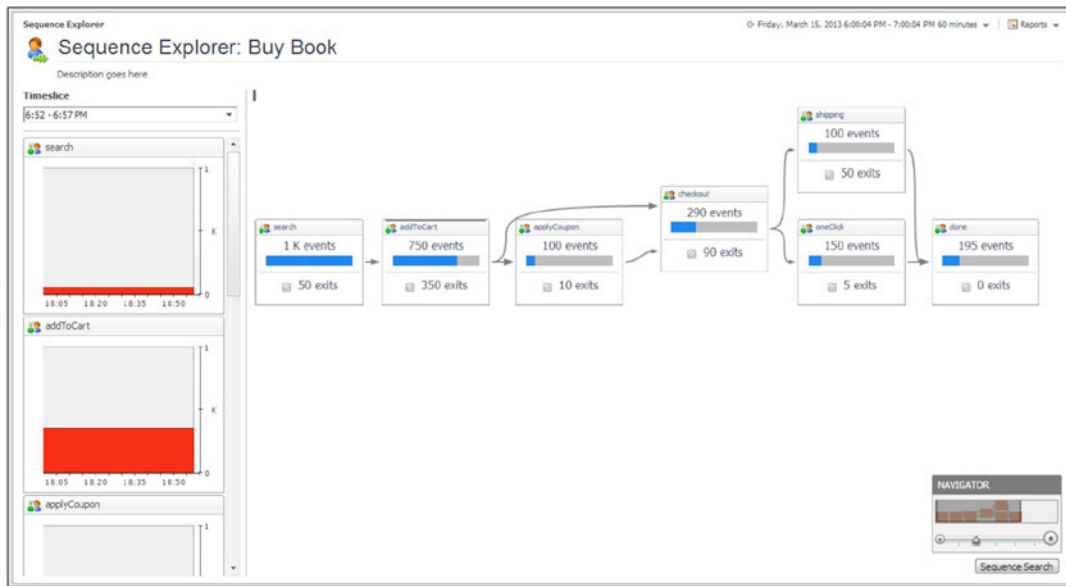


Figure 1: Transaction Funnel Analysis

This release also supports detailed out-of-the box reporting of Web analytics, including page and hit analysis by location, browser, and content type (see Figure 2). The analysis includes “Hit Count” by Operating System, content category, browser type, and similar factors.

# Pre-defined page & hit analysis

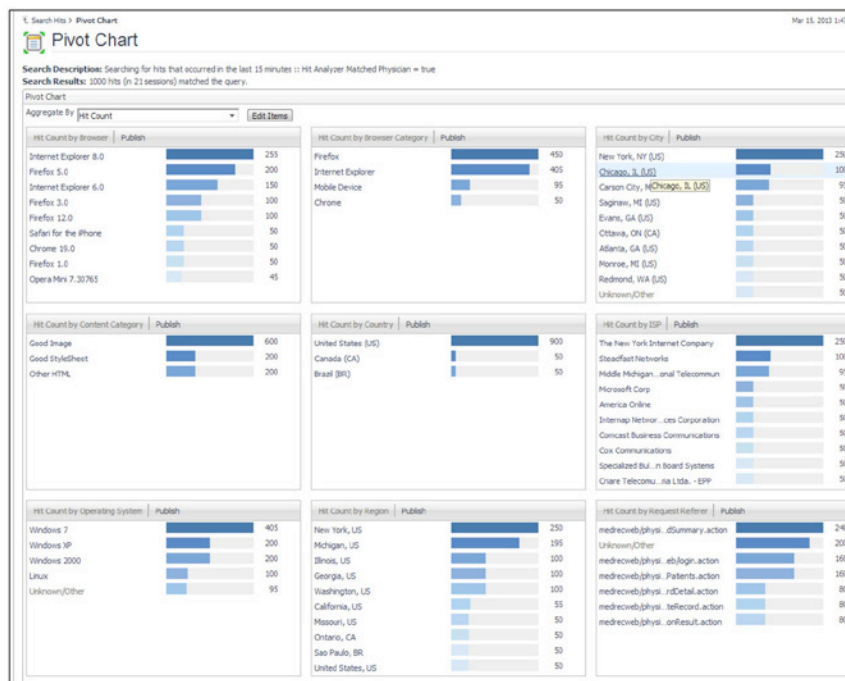


Figure 2: “Pivot Chart” Page and Hit Analysis

- *Ease of Use:* Dell has added a number of features that enable customers to get up and running very quickly and reduce the amount of time necessary to configure and administer the Foglight platform. Foglight 5.9 is available as a turnkey virtual or physical appliance which is pre-configured and includes the network sniffer and RUM products. Deployment is significantly simplified, and Foglight can be scaled by adding physical and/or virtual appliances.

Past releases required the installation of separate cartridges for much of the Foglight functionality. In Foglight 5.9, all of the end user related functions have been aggregated into the appliances, and only code drilldown functionality – Java and .NET – remain as separate modules.

Analytics and reporting are also more automated than in past releases (which required customers to manually relate Java transactions to end user transactions, for example). Customers can now define end-user transactions by frame, URL, or similar parameters and Java transactions automatically attach based on the information provided. Foglight also recognizes IP addresses of Virtual Machines (VMs) and automatically models virtual devices accordingly.

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## Differentiators and Key Value Propositions

- *Collects and stores rich set of user- and transaction-focused information:* The Big Data repository, containing all relevant metrics for every user, is a key differentiator. It delivers a more granular approach to storing transaction-related metrics, particularly in comparison to the data aggregation methodologies favored by many competing solutions.
- *Both user- and transaction-focused insight, out of the box:* The richness of data in the repository makes it possible to analyze and report on transactions from both technical and business/user perspectives. Customers have access to reports showing all users impacted by a given transaction trace, for example. Conversely, these enhancements also position each “bit” of transaction-related data in context to the entire transaction. For example, while Foglight monitors asynchronous AJAX requests at the browser, understanding the impact of a menu click requires that the AJAX request is linked with the “back-end” transaction as well.
- *Business context:* While the Foglight solution has traditionally been positioned primarily as a tool for technical users, it is increasingly evolving towards far more business-focused reporting. Particularly relevant to eCommerce and eTail businesses, Foglight’s Web analytics capabilities enable technical or business users to drill down into end-user actions to understand how well a company’s Web applications support business goals and objectives.

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## EMA Perspective

Foglight 5.9 is an ideal example of what can happen to a great product when it is acquired by a software-focused company. Dell has repeatedly stated its intent to build a set of end-to-end IT management software solutions, and the acquisition of Quest in 2012 seemed to deliver on that promise.<sup>2</sup> Far too often, however, acquisitions vanish into a “black hole” within major companies, never to be seen again. The continued development of the Foglight solution and the leading-edge features in 5.9 demonstrate Dell’s commitment to the software side of the business. They also display savvy design on the part of the Foglight product team, as the product continues to significantly improve over time.

<sup>2</sup> See EMA Brief on Dell’s acquisition of Quest at: <http://www.enterprisemanagement.com/research/asset.php/2323/Dell-Delivers-on-Promise-of-End-to-End-IT-Management-with-Acquisition-of-Quest>

The announcements showcased in this release take Foglight to the next level of functionality with Big Data-driven analytics and a new focus on business-centric reporting. Few APM vendors as yet are using Big Data techniques and repositories to store the breadth and depth of transaction- and user-related data we see in Foglight 5.9. This, in turn, provides a foundation to branch beyond APM and into Web analytics reporting, which has traditionally required an entirely different set of products.

In future releases, additional support for native mobile applications, currently addressed by HTML monitoring capabilities, would be “nice to have.” With the breadth of data being collected and stored, customers will also likely request more open access to the Foglight Big Data repository. Development of an API providing access to the repository by third-party analytics tools would be a significant value-add.

In the meantime, EMA Analysts see this release as a key milestone for Foglight. It marks the product’s entry into the Big Data arena and positions it among the most innovative APM solutions on the market.

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### **About EMA**

Founded in 1996, Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) is a leading industry analyst firm that provides deep insight across the full spectrum of IT and data management technologies. EMA analysts leverage a unique combination of practical experience, insight into industry best practices, and in-depth knowledge of current and planned vendor solutions to help its clients achieve their goals. Learn more about EMA research, analysis, and consulting services for enterprise line of business users, IT professionals and IT vendors at [www.enterprisemanagement.com](http://www.enterprisemanagement.com) or [blogs.enterprisemanagement.com](http://blogs.enterprisemanagement.com). You can also follow EMA on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#). 2689.062013