Getting the Most From Your Oracle Database Support
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Executive Summary

With more than 300,000 installs, Oracle® is recognized as the leading database even among SAP customers. It is mature and stable and more than supports your business requirements. There are typically few issues, so your support tickets with Oracle are most likely rare.

However, there are several pain points for many Oracle Database customers. First is total cost of ownership (TCO) — including the high cost of operating, maintaining and upgrading the database. Secondly, Oracle Database customers are constantly concerned about performance, availability and security. And finally, the limitations of Oracle’s support policies for Oracle Database in a virtualized environment have caused many companies not to virtualize Oracle Database.

This white paper summarizes the Oracle Lifetime Support Policy for Oracle Technology products (including its policy on supporting a virtualized Oracle Database), analyzes the strategic roadmap for customers using specific releases of Oracle Database under Oracle annual support, and concludes with actionable recommendations for Oracle Database licensees. Major points:

- There is limited return on investment (ROI) in upgrading from today’s feature-rich database releases.
- You can save significant funds by leveraging independent support to reduce maintenance fees and related costs.
- Your current Oracle Database release can run your operations for decades to come.
- Independent support can help you reduce risk and leave options open for new technologies.

Independent support from Rimini Street replaces Oracle support for your Oracle Database, enabling you to save 50 percent annually and up to 1.5 times your total vendor support fees over a decade, including the avoidance of expensive forced upgrades.

Oracle Database licensees are choosing independent support from Rimini Street for substantial cost savings, guaranteed ultra-responsive support, premium features and reduced risk — and because today, hundreds of world-class organizations have already validated that independent support is a proven option.
Oracle Lifetime Support Policy

Oracle has standardized its support policies across many different organically developed and acquired product lines. This policy is known today as the Oracle Lifetime Support Policy, and it sets consistent support policies, prices and timelines for most Oracle products. While standardization has its benefits, Oracle is reluctant to negotiate any exceptions to or deviations from its standard Lifetime Support Policy.

Oracle’s standard Lifetime Support Policy has three phases:

- **Premier Support**: Oracle’s standard support, typically lasting for five years from general availability (GA) at a cost of 22 percent of your license fee and often accompanied by annual increases with each renewal.

- **Extended Support**: Increase of 10 percent in Year 1 over the cost of Premier Support, plus an additional 20 percent in Years 2 and 3; limited bug fixes, with less commitment to interoperability updates and third-party platform certifications. Extended Support lasts for three years following the end of Premier Support and is not always offered.

- **Sustaining Support**: Fixes, updates and critical patch updates (CPUs) created during the Premium Support phase. Sustaining Support specifically excludes new updates, fixes, security alerts, data fixes, CPUs (Critical Patch Updates) and new product certifications. The cost is 22 percent of your original license fee and lasts indefinitely.

Oracle Virtualization Support Policy

Although Oracle says it provides support for a virtualized database with third-party vendors, the reality is less convincing. Oracle states: “Oracle will only provide support for issues that either are known to occur on the native OS, or can be demonstrated not to be as a result of running on VMware.” This can result in finger-pointing among vendors, with customers not receiving the support they need — or simply refraining from moving their databases to a virtual machine. In fact, a direct result of Oracle’s support policy is that a far lower percentage of customers have virtualized Oracle Database compared to those who have virtualized non-Oracle databases.

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1 Oracle Corporation, Oracle Lifetime Support Policy, Oracle Technology Products, December 2016.

2 Oracle Corporation, Support Position for Oracle Products Running on VMWare Virtualized Environments, ID 2492121, November, 2010
Oracle Database Release Analysis

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</table>

Figure 1: Oracle Database end-of-support dates by release

Oracle Database 11.1 and Earlier Releases

If you use Oracle Database 11.1 or a prior release, you’re already on Sustaining Support and therefore receiving virtually no support (along with users of Oracle 12.1 Standard Edition and Oracle 12.1 Standard Edition 1). Many users refer to this stage as “de-support.” Seventy-four percent of Oracle Database users have some instances that receive Sustaining Support³.

Amazingly, Oracle customers are still paying 22 percent simply for old patches and fixes.

Users of Oracle Database 11.1 and earlier releases should consider the following important points:

- You are limited to Sustaining Support and yet are probably quite happy with the database itself. Twenty-two percent of your original license fees goes to a support offering that doesn’t provide CPUs or even attempts to address new fixes for your issues; this delivers practically no value.

- Upgrading to Oracle Database 12c is very complicated, and apart from offering the questionable benefit of multitenancy, 12c delivers little business value. Upgrading to 12c from release levels 8, 9 and 10.1 is a complex two-step process, requiring the intermediate stage of an upgrade to 11g. Rimini Street recommends postponing an upgrade to 12c until you really need the functionality.

Oracle Database 11.2 Release

Oracle Database 11g is widely considered to be a very solid product, offering robust functionality and very few issues. There are distinctions to consider regarding the 11.2 patch sets noted below:

Important considerations for 11.2.0.3 and earlier patch set customers:

- If you are running 11.2.0.3 or earlier patch sets, you are in a similar situation to release 11.1. While technically not in Sustaining Support, this release has limited coverage according to the Oracle “Error Correction Policy.” Specifically no bug fixes, no patches, no CPU/SPUs, no PSUs, no BPs have been produced since August 28, 2015.⁴

- This means that while you continue to pay full price for your maintenance fees you have only access to old fixes and are at risk of jeopardizing operations for any new issues.

Important considerations for 11.2.0.4 customers:

- Release 11.2.0.4 entered Extended Support in January 2015. Extended support is typically at an increased cost. Oracle provided a waiver to the increased Extended Support fee, however that waiver expires December 31, 2018. After this date, your maintenance fees will increase.

- According to Oracle, Extended Support may or may not include certification with some new third-party products/versions.⁵

- While it may be easier to upgrade to 12c from 11g than from earlier releases, upgrading is still a complex process. Before you walk down that path, you should independently verify the ROI you anticipate by upgrading.

Can you provide your board with a solid business case for upgrading, based on data and assumptions that are not provided by Oracle? Many will struggle with how to develop a strong business case, but this is a crucial step. Due diligence is required when deciding to move forward with an upgrade because it can otherwise limit your ability and resources to focus on more strategic issues.

**Oracle Database 12c Release**

Oracle Database 12c is Oracle’s latest and greatest. The multitenancy feature is important to those interested in moving to the cloud

Users of Oracle Database 12c should consider the following important points:

- Check your tickets for Oracle Database support. How often do you actually need support? You may consider Oracle Support an insurance policy, but is the high cost of that policy really worth it?

- If you’re already using 12c, you should be very content for the next five years or more. It is unlikely Oracle will release any new functionality that will be critical and provide an ROI for your business. Even the newest release 12.2 is primarily delivering only minor enhancements for existing features like in-memory and multi-tenant functionality.

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Options Oracle Database Licensees Should Consider on All Releases

1. Continue to pay 22 percent or more for support that is seldom used — and is potentially of little value if you are on Sustaining Support.

2. Switch to independent support — As a Rimini Street client, you are assigned a named Primary Support Engineer (PSE) who will respond to every critical support request in 15 minutes or less. (Actual average response time is less than five minutes.) Our PSEs work closely with a team of Oracle Database technical and functional experts. This ultra-responsive service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. With Rimini Street, you also retain the option of upgrading at a later date to the most current release you’re entitled to at the time you leave — but you’ll upgrade only if and when it makes sense for your business, not just because upgrading is high on Oracle’s agenda for your strategic roadmap.

Key Advantages of Independent Support

Customers who switch to Rimini Street Support for Oracle Database enjoy the following benefits:

- **Cost savings**: Save 50 percent over Oracle annual support fees and remain on your current database release for as long as you wish — five, ten, fifteen years or more.

- **Deep expertise**: The Rimini Street program for Oracle Database licensees includes support for all aspects and components of the Oracle Database product including:
  - Active Data Guard
  - Application Express
  - Data Masking
  - Database Diagnostics and Configuration
  - Database Vault
  - Enterprise Manager
  - In-Memory Database Cache
  - OLAP
  - Partitioning
  - Performance Tuning
  - Real Application Clusters (RAC)
  - Warehouse Builder

- **Expert database consulting at no additional charge**: With independent support from Rimini Street, you receive expert consultation from our Technology Support Services experts around best practices, configurations and hardware. This helps ensure interoperability, security and optimal system performance.
- **Database virtualization support**: Regardless of where the issue lies, Rimini Street will work with you to diagnose the problem and determine a solution — without finger-pointing.

- **Tailored, holistic approach to security**: 74 percent of Oracle Database users say they are at least one CPU cycle behind. CPU cycles is six months to a year or more, before a patch is actually applied — and that’s after Oracle finally releases the patch. Some vulnerabilities are never patched by Oracle. Companies relying on CPUs are vulnerable. Rimini Street can guide you in applying a holistic approach to security to keep your database secure without constant patching.

- **Option to upgrade to the current Oracle Database version at a later date**: When you switch to Rimini Support for Oracle Database, you can upgrade if and when it makes sense for your business, because during our onboarding process you have the option of archiving all the updates, patches, scripts, documentation and files that you need to upgrade.

The Software Vendor Support Model Is Expensive and Outdated

**Fairness and Relevance of Vendor Support Model Questioned**

The big software vendors have enjoyed a virtual monopoly on support services for their products. With today’s 90 percent profit margins on support operations, every 10 dollars you pay a vendor the vendor spends only one dollar on actual support. Customers are coming to the conclusion that the vendor support model is at best dated — and at worst obsolete and grossly unfair to the enterprise software licensee.

And industry analysts agree: You may be spending too much on enterprise software annual support and receiving limited value in return. Ongoing maintenance and operational costs typically consume the majority of all IT budgets, with only 11 percent available for business transformation initiatives.7

**High-Cost, Low-Value Maintenance Expenses Limit Innovation**

**IT Spending Categories**

6 IOUG – DBA—SECURITY SUPERHERO, 2014 IOUG Enterprise Data Security Survey

7 Gartner, “Gartner IT Key Metrics Data, 2016 IT Enterprise Summary Report,” December 14, 2015
Next Steps: You Have a Choice of Annual Support Providers

A Better Option: Oracle Database Licensees Realize Value with Rimini Street

Hundreds of world-class organizations are exercising their right to select the annual support provider that best fits their needs and budget.

Independent support from Rimini Street replaces your annual support program from the vendor. Rimini Street provides premium support so you can continue to run your Oracle Database cost effectively for the next decade or longer with no required upgrades. Oracle Database licensees choose independent support from Rimini Street for:

- **Substantial cost savings:** Rimini Street offers guaranteed savings of 50 percent over vendor annual support fees.

- **Premium, relevant, cutting-edge service model:** Rimini Street delivers guaranteed ultra-responsive support and premium features such as support for security, interoperability and performance tuning — all at no additional cost.

- **Greater strategic flexibility:** Rimini Street can help you avoid costly upgrades; extend the life of your current, stable database release; and reduce risk as you position yourself for the next proven technology platform.

**Calculate your savings:** 50 percent off the annual support fees is just the tip of the iceberg. Upgrade avoidance and maintenance efficiencies deliver other savings that can be easily calculated for your company by going to www.riministreet.com/savings-calculator

Many organizations use independent support as a key aspect of their application strategy, reallocating the savings from independent support to address real business problems involving their systems, while evaluating new technologies at their own pace — not according to a vendor’s release timeline and agenda.

“Univera has relied on Rimini Street’s support for Oracle EBS and Oracle Technology since 2012. We appreciate the significant investments Rimini Street has made in order to deliver robust support for these complex Oracle products. By switching to Rimini Street, Univera has received more responsive service and we have redirected the savings to more strategic projects needed by the business.”

*Ron Billock, CIO
Univera, Inc.*
Database Licensees

This paper has pointed out the very real issues around using vendor support: expense, less-than-optimal responsiveness and forced upgrades. Rather than going that route, you may want to consider Rimini Street independent support because it offers the following undeniable benefits.

- **Move to independent support.** Save 50 percent on annual support and maintenance fees.

- **Maximize the value of current releases** — Extend the longevity of your stable and established database and avoid an upgrade with no business value. And know that you can upgrade your Oracle Database to the most current version as of the time you leave the vendor under Rimini Street Support if you wish.

- **Use your savings from independent support.** Address real business problems around your system, such as ongoing innovation and ever-changing business requirements.

**For More Information**

To learn more about getting the most out of your Oracle database support, let’s talk at [www.riministreet.com/contact-us](http://www.riministreet.com/contact-us) or [info@riministreet.com](mailto:info@riministreet.com).
About Rimini Street, Inc.

Rimini Street is the global leader in providing independent enterprise software support services. The company has redefined enterprise support services since 2005 with an innovative, award-winning program that enables Oracle and SAP licensees to save up to 90 percent on total support costs. Clients can remain on their current software release without any required upgrades for at least 15 years. Over 1000 global, Fortune 500, midmarket, and public sector organizations from a broad range of industries have selected Rimini Street as their trusted, independent support provider.