

# 8 essential questions to ask when evaluating an APM solution



## Why Application Performance Management (APM) is crucial in today's software-defined world

Software has forever changed the way we interact and do business. To survive in this software-defined world, organizations are continually redefining and evolving their software strategies to provide applications that engage and delight customers like never before. To put it bluntly, the new competitive battleground is digital, and the only way to win is by exceeding the expectations of your users.

But these modern applications require complex architectures to meet the demands of users, as well as to ensure companies can innovate at a rapid pace to remain competitive. Although these complexities help organizations deliver the experience expected by users, they're becoming increasingly hard to manage and are more susceptible to problems that impact overall performance.

This makes Application Performance Management (APM) a business necessity. In general, the goal of APM is to help businesses identify and remedy potential application issues before they impact the end user. But with the numerous APM products in the market today, how do you know a potential solution can support the needs of your specific application?

In this guide, we'll discuss the questions you should be asking to make sure an APM solution is right for you.

## The three core capabilities of a modern APM solution

As you compare solutions, you'll notice many different industry interpretations of what capabilities APM should cover. But it all comes down to three simple requirements. You know an APM solution is comprehensive if it provides:

- **Visibility across your entire application stack.** It's important to visualize and monitor every interaction and all activity across the full stack of an application. This includes all the front-end, back-end, infrastructure, and cloud components required for your application to perform properly.
- **Insights into application performance.** A good APM solution helps you understand what "normal" performance looks like, and when performance deviates from the norm. It should alert your support teams — ideally in real time — to these anomalies as they emerge, so teams can quickly take action.
- **Analysis of the root-cause of issues.** You should be able to identify not only where the problem is coming from, but also what caused the issue, for the fastest possible Mean Time To Resolution (MTTR).





## Questions to ask when evaluating APM solutions

Every APM solution is built differently, so it might take some digging to validate a solution's proficiency in the essential capabilities above. The following questions should cover all your bases. As you start to explore the product's features, ask yourself:



### 1 Can I understand emerging issues before they impact the user?

A great APM solution should leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to evaluate the performance of your application, indicating when a potential issue could occur. This helps shift your APM practices from reactive to proactive and resolves emerging issues before they become major problems.

### 2 Can I monitor all application transactions in business context?

A great APM solution can immediately identify and display the application transactions that are central to the needs of your business and the end user, so you know right away what problems to prioritize. Do not overlook automatic business transaction identification features — without the context they provide, you might find yourself flying blind in alert storms.

### 3 At what level of detail can I understand our customers?

Especially with customer-facing applications, your APM solution should immediately be able to provide customer interaction information. This can be anything from the number and location of customers, through to the relative importance of customers. This information should be accessible through analytics features with easy data query, customized dashboards, and report creation capabilities.

### 4 Can I quickly identify and isolate the root cause of application problems?

As mentioned earlier, modern APM solutions leverage AI/ML to help you dramatically speed up MTTR. This starts with automatically calculating application performance baselines to ensure all abnormal behavior is detected and teams alerted. Then, leveraging ML algorithms, the solution should identify the suspected cause so you can effectively triage the issue with context to expedite the resolution.

## 5 Can I correlate application performance to business outcomes?

A customer-impacting application issue in today's software-defined business is everyone's concern. A great APM solution allows you to visualize and quantify how performance issues impact the business, in a way that makes sense to key stakeholders. This not only helps you prioritize issues that impact key business metrics, like revenue, but it also facilitates stronger collaboration among line of business, IT development, and operations teams.

## 6 Does this solution facilitate automated issue remediations?

A great APM solution can help you automatically run defined actions, either via scripts or integration, in order to resolve emerging issues before they impact the business. For example, when an issue is caused by application demand and available capacity, APM can mitigate the impact with features that facilitate cloud auto-scaling to automatically provide extra capacity.

## 7 How easy is it to utilize the capabilities of the APM solution?

Your solution may tick all the above boxes, but is it easy to deploy? Does it support SaaS, hybrid, and on-premises configurations? This powerful and complex feature set should be packaged into a simple, elegant, and user-friendly interface. Relevant and contextual data and insights should be easily accessible and digestible for stakeholders both within and outside of IT. Additionally, the solution must support the necessary data privacy regulations, like GDPR in the EU.

## 8 How forward-thinking is the APM vendor?

This isn't so much a capability, but more of a safeguard to ensure you're investing in a solution that can help you meet the application performance challenges of today and tomorrow. Look at the vendor's vision: How do they plan to keep up as new technology trends emerge? For example, APM is on the cusp of its next stage of evolution with OpenTelemetry, a vendor-neutral standard for collecting telemetry data for applications, their supporting infrastructures, and services. It's just as important to evaluate how quickly the vendor can innovate as it is to know where the product stands today.

## Conclusion

Investing in an APM solution is a critical step in ensuring your applications continue to meet the expectations of your end users. During the evaluation or proof-of-value process, it's important to hold APM providers accountable for showing how their tools can support your individual use cases and the challenges you're facing in your industry.

By asking the right questions, you'll be able to pinpoint which solutions offer the breadth and depth of capabilities needed to support the needs of your application — both today, and every step of the way along your digital transformation journey.

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