

JULY 2, 2012

# Compass Guide to WCM, Q3 2012

## Evaluation of SDL Tridion

**By:** Tony White



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# SDL Tridion 2011 Product Evaluation

**By:** Tony White

**Date:** July 2, 2012

## ARS LOGICA

## ARS LOGICA POSITION

A leader in WCM since circa 2006, SDL arguably produces the most functionally robust enterprise platform in the industry, with particular strengths in multi-channel marketing, globalization, translation management, and brand management. Based on a heterogeneous technical infrastructure, the product can be tricky to implement, but global, enterprise-wide deployments often require the fine-grained configurability of such a solution. Although SDL Tridion is a market-leading WCM product in and of itself, the real differentiator for SDL as a company rests in its enterprise customer experience management prowess.

## NOTES & RESOURCES

### Compass Guide Vendor Questionnaire

Some company and product information contained in this report was collected via Ars Logica's 172-item Vendor Questionnaire. Vendor responses were always independently verified through customer interviews, implementation monitoring, Ars Logica's comprehensive knowledge base, and hands-on product testing.

### Hands-On Product Testing

Ars Logica conducted hands-on product testing in January 2010 at SDL WCMS headquarters in Amsterdam and received a comprehensive product update in October 2011.

### Customer Interviews

Ars Logica interviewed users of every product covered in the Compass Guide, including SDL Tridion.

### Implementation Monitoring

Since the 1990s, Ars Logica founder Tony White has kept close tabs on ongoing WCM implementations. Some of this knowledge is represented in the Compass Guide reports.

### No Vendor Influence

Ars Logica retains complete editorial control over the Compass Guides and receives no funding in their production.

## SDL Vendor Overview

In 2007, Tridion (now SDL's WCMS division). This review covers the WCMS division's products only. SDL has been a market leader in WCM since circa 2006 in the U.S., several years earlier in Europe, and for the last two to three years in Asia-Pacific. The vendor produces an extremely flexible, scalable platform that incorporates one of the broadest sets of feature-functionality available on the market. The product is particularly well-suited to global enterprise deployments with requirements for brand management, translation management, and multi-channel marketing. The vendor's products above and beyond WCM put it at the front of the pack in the emerging CXM (customer experience management) market.

### Company Profile

Year Founded: 1997  
Headquarters: Amsterdam; North American headquarters in New York  
Employees (or FTE equivalents): 200  
Geographies: Global  
Revenue: \$65 million (estimated)  
Product Types Offered: WCM, translation management, globalization/localization management, personalization/targeting  
Commercial or Open Source: Commercial  
Strategic Implementation Partners: Accenture, Amplexor, Capgemini, Isobar, Razorfish, SapientNitro, Siteworx; numerous regional integrators and digital agencies  
Top Competitors: Adobe, Sitecore, Autonomy (HP), OpenText, Oracle  
Key Vertical Industries: Manufacturing, finance, travel and tourism, public sector

### Product Profile

Product Name: SDL Tridion  
Version: 2011  
Next version release date: Q3 2012  
Market segment: Enterprise  
Average Sales Price (License Only): \$250,000  
Technology Platform: Primarily Java and .NET  
Key Strengths: Global Websites, translation management, multi-channel marketing, content targeting, brand management  
Key Limitations: Implementation complexity, heterogeneity of the code base, price  
Highest-Value Use Case: Global deployment of a large, public-facing, brand-dependent, website with robust multi-channel marketing and translation management requirements

## Vendor History & Product Evolution

Founded in Amsterdam in 1999, Tridion launched its R3 product after several years of developing the application for clients on professional services engagements. Although the company was regional for the first couple years, the product's success was immediate, gaining traction within the Netherlands and surrounding countries rapidly. With customers such as ABN-AMRO, ING, and Philips, Tridion launched its U.S. presence in 2006. Tridion rapidly became a market leader in the U.S., obtaining the top ranking from several analyst and consulting firms within the first year. This leadership position continues unabated to the present. From May 2007 (when SDL acquired Tridion) until mid-2010, SDL and Tridion operated fairly autonomously. The difficulties resulting from integrating the two companies have since been overcome, and the WCMS division is now thriving under new leadership.

Since 2008, SDL WCMS has successfully integrated its highest value-added features (campaign management, e.g.) with SDL's other product lines. On the whole, SDL has also done an excellent job of leveraging top talent in the WCMS division for the development of other product lines, such as Quatron. Though the products overall are built with a wide variety of languages and standards – making it sometimes unwieldy for customers to customize them – SDL has done a commendable job of unifying the product's presentation to users. The latest iteration of this has seen considerable refinement of the UI for online marketing managers. As with any product that has been developed over a period of 10 years, there are implementation and deployment complexities – to be sure – but SDL has done as good a job as any vendor at providing a robust, standards-based SDK (software development kit) and a respectable set of enterprise APIs.

As of the announcement of the acquisition by SDL, Tridion had already integrated SDL's localization, globalization, and translation-management functionality, extending the company's leadership in WCM to globalization as well. In the same vein, SDL WCMS in 2010 marketed its SmartTarget (based on Fredhopper technology) and Quatron products, which put SDL at the front of the pack in the rapidly-evolving e-commerce platform market.

## Key Recent Developments

In the last version of this report, we stated, "The most important recent developments for the Web Content Management Solutions Group of SDL are the change in U.S. management of the company, and – as mentioned above – the refocus of the senior-most technical talent in the WCM Solutions Group in the Netherlands on the Fred Hopper and Quatron products." Fortunately, difficulties in the transition were handled well, and both the WCMS and Quatron divisions – along with the translation management division (aka Trados) – are doing well. We expect 2012-2013 to be especially productive for SDL as brand management and global information management for mobile devices emerge as top enterprise priorities.

## Profiling the Ideal Buyer

The ideal buyer of SDL Tridion is one with enterprise-wide WCM requirements, a focus on online sales and/or marketing, heavy dependence on the Web-based value of their brands, and a global presence requiring robust translation management capabilities. This is not to say that small to mid-size companies cannot also use the product, but the customer reaping the highest value from the product will be the multinational corporation facing the challenge of managing and marketing their online brands across geographies, languages, and sales channels.

- **Enterprise-Scale Deployment**

SDL Tridion 2011 should only be considered by customers with enterprise-wide WCM implementation plans. The product is sufficiently scalable to handle the largest possible set of requirements, and may not be a good value for small-to-midsize companies who will never fully leverage the product's capabilities.

- **Global, Public-Facing Website**

A particular forte of SDL Tridion, global content management is a requirement namely for companies with high volumes of content that span multiple geographies, languages, brands, and online channels.

- **Emphasis on Enterprise CXM**

In addition to equipping large enterprise to manage multiple brands across multiple geographies, SDL Tridion, along with its complements from the remaining SDL product range, provides a solid foundation for the development and execution of global information management strategies.

## SDL Tridion Will Not Be a Good Fit, If...

If your plans within the next two years do not include the deployment or overhaul of a multi-site, multi-geography, multi-lingual, brand-focused, public-facing Web presence, you may find more value in less costly WCM solutions than SDL Tridion. Ars Logica frequently sees companies overbuy when they have only vague ideas of needing a more scalable, sophisticated product in the longer term. That said, we also see companies underbuy, usually due both to price sensitivity and ignorance of what the combination of best-of-breed WCM, e-commerce, brand management, and translation management could do for their bottom line.

## Key Product Strengths

Of all the WCM platforms on the market, SDL Tridion is unquestionably the leader in globalization capabilities. The vendor's expertise in global information technologies spills into all of its products, regardless of functional classification. SDL Tridion 2011 (the stand-alone WCM product) proves adept at handling large, multi-lingual, multi-site, multi-geography web properties. To this, SDL (the overall company) adds best-of-breed translation management, brand management, digital/media asset management, and e-commerce capabilities.

Beginning in 2007, SDL WCMS focused heavily on the development of specialized tools for the online marketing manager, which now appear in its Multi-Channel Marketing, Visitor Intelligence, and Customer Interaction modules. The functions of these modules are obvious from their names, but the elegance of the user interface and ease-of-use are not. Overall, the product does a superb job of balancing the complexities of hardcore marketing analytics with the need for an intuitive UI that non-technical business users will readily adopt. Beyond considerations of product usage, SDL Tridion 2011 provides one of the most complete Sales & Marketing toolkits, affording users a high degree of control over the individual components of their online brand.

SDL (specifically SDL WCMS) has consistently demonstrated its commitment to customer satisfaction, regularly sending senior executives to nurture and maintain customer relationships as a matter of policy.

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**FIGURE 1** SDL Tridion 2011, Key Product Strengths and Limitations

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**Below are several key product strengths and limitations that potential buyers should keep in mind when assembling vendor shortlists.**

### KEY STRENGTHS

Integration with SDL's enterprise customer experience management products
Globalization/localization capabilities (including translation management)
Architectural separation of content and user profiles/roles from the WCM application itself
Brand management
Optimization for marketing professionals

### KEY LIMITATIONS

Implementation complexity
Heterogeneity of the code base
Price justifiable only with usage of other products in SDL's platform

Source: Ars Logica, Inc.

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Source of Information: Product testing & update (Jan. 2010, Oct. 2011), customer interviews, Vendor Questionnaire.

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## Key Product Limitations

In the last version of this report (SDL Tridion 2009), we cited SDL's challenges in training and certifying its partners, due primarily to the company's rapid growth. Ars Logica has since seen this problem disappear.

As with any product under continuous development for more than 10 years, the code base of SDL Tridion 2011 is heterogeneous. That is, the product has evolved over the years in ways not originally envisioned, and the product architecture has become mildly cumbersome. The drawbacks become evident primarily during implementations and upgrades, and it is usually the professional services provider or systems architect who feels the pain. Once up and running, however, the product performs nicely, and the non-technical business user need never know what's "under the hood." Similarly, post-implementation or upgrade, system maintenance is relatively routine.

To the caveat of the last paragraph, we should add that most of the truly enterprise-oriented vendors (the very upper tier of stand-alone WCM vendors, along with the infrastructure/middleware vendors) have either such a wide range of products or such highly-scalable stand-alone products that the code bases have, over time, come to include myriad sources. More succinctly, enterprise products are typically complex, not just in their range of functionality, but also in their technical underpinnings.

After the acquisition of Tridion by SDL in May 2007, Tridion continued to operate autonomously for the most part until mid-2010. In the last version of this report, Ars Logica referred to some of the internal differences of opinion at SDL that threatened to impact negatively both the planned development of the Tridion products, as well as the strategic product synergies that result in the overall platform's Global Information Management capabilities.

Finally, the price of the product -- while fully justifiable for organizations with global information management requirements above and beyond strict WCM -- will put it out of reach of many SMB companies who would benefit from the synergies between Tridion's WCM functionality and the overall platform's e-commerce, and digital/media asset management capabilities. We have been involved in a number of consulting engagements for midsize companies whose myopic price sensitivities likely shut them out of substantial online retail opportunities that required better brand management and customer experience management functionality than they thought they needed.

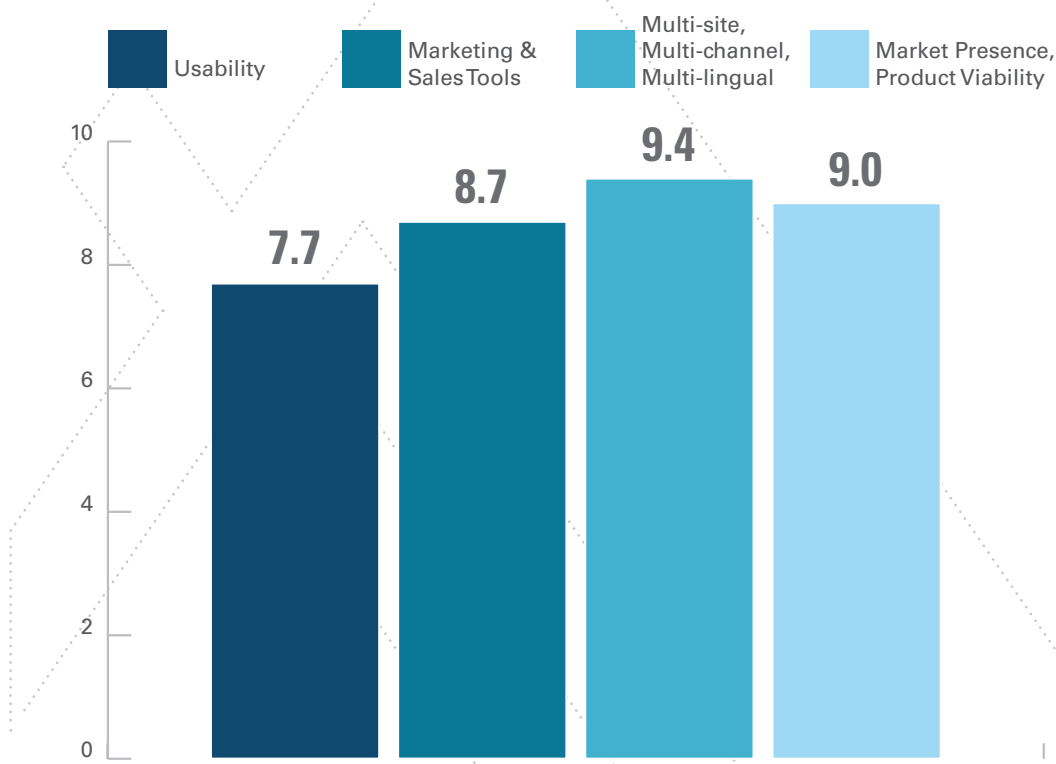


## Vendor/Product Report Cards

The features, functions, and technical underpinnings of WCM products vary wildly, as do the customer requirements they are intended to satisfy. For this reason, the only reliable way to assure the best product fit for a particular client is to spend anywhere from several weeks to several months assessing the client's specific needs and analyzing product capabilities line by line. Still, Ars Logica is frequently asked to rate products in categories such as those in Figures 2 and 3. In using these ratings, please take care not to compare products in different market segments (see the Product Profile section of Page 4). For example, a Scalability score of 9 for an "Enterprise" product does not equate to the same score for an "Entry Level" product.

**FIGURE 2** SDL Tridion Report Card for the Business User

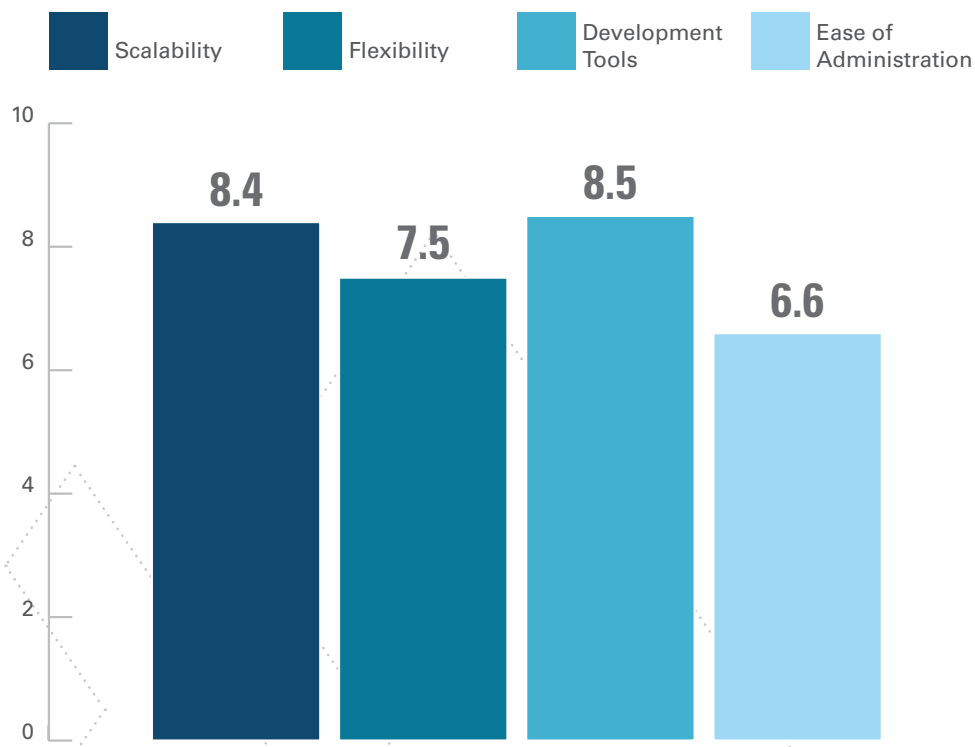
Figure 2 shows Ars Logica's rating of SDL Tridion 2011 in four categories of critical importance to business users. Refer to Page 11 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.



Source of Information: Product testing & update (Jan. 2010, Oct. 2011), customer interviews, Vendor Questionnaire

**FIGURE 3** SDL Tridion Report Card for Technologists

Figure 3 shows Ars Logica's rating of SDL Tridion 2011 in four categories of critical importance to technologists. Refer to Page 12 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.



Source of Information: Product testing & update (Jan. 2010, Oct. 2011), customer interviews, Vendor Questionnaire

## Report Card Evaluation Criteria

In the process of analyzing WCM solutions, Ars Logica has established a set of evaluation criteria, which at the highest level can be separated into four categories for non-technical business users and four categories for technologists. Scores in these categories represent averages of a large number of detailed criteria, and are meant to be used as a means of quickly comparing products within the same market segment – not as a substitute for painstaking requirements and product matching.

### Criteria for Business Users

- **Usability**

Usability refers to the relative ease of learning and using a WCM application. For non-technical business users, factors contributing to high scores in this category include intuitive and consistent user interfaces, streamlined task completion (i.e. minimal number of steps to complete a task), integration with the desktop, contextual editing capabilities, and documented high user adoption rates among a vendor's customers.

- **Marketing & Sales Tools**

Increasingly, enterprises are relying on marketing and sales tools within WCM applications to improve sales conversion rates, increase average transaction amounts, draw customers back to their Web sites, analyze online behavioral patterns, and so on. This category rates the presence and quality of such tools.

- **Multi-Site, Multi-Channel, Multi-Lingual Capabilities**

This category assesses a product's ability to support multiple sites; deliver content to multiple channels on multiple devices; and create, store, present, disseminate, and/or translate content into multiple languages. Scores in this category represent an average of a product's capabilities in all three of these broad functional areas.

- **Market Presence, Product Viability**

The Market Presence, Product Viability category rates both a vendor's overall market presence relative to competitors and its dedication to the continued development of its WCM products. If these two factors are not aligned with each other, an explanation of why will be included.

## Criteria for Technologists

- **Scalability**

Scalability refers to the ability of a product to function well as system demands increase. Factors contributing to scalability are database size, query efficiency, bandwidth consumption, ease of system management, caching efficiency, load balancing, and mass content deployment capabilities.

- **Flexibility**

Flexibility denotes a product's ability to integrate easily with existing enterprise infrastructure, including operating systems, Web servers, databases, directories, development tools, and other enterprise applications such as ERP, CRM, document management systems, search, portals, and so forth.

- **Development Tools**

This category describes the quality of a product's integrated development environment (IDE), the technologies that the IDE incorporates, and overall ease of customized application development. Although this category refers primarily to development frameworks (Eclipse, e.g.), other ad hoc tools are also included, such as page templates, HTML/XML editors, WYSIWYG editors, PDF generators, and any other software that enables or eases the production, formatting and dissemination of content.

- **Ease of Administration**

Some WCM products require significantly more work to administer (sometimes 5-10 times more) than others. This category rates the relative resource intensity required to keep the system running smoothly, where higher scores reflect less work. Roughly speaking, higher scores also indicate better coordination of application components due to more methodical system design.



## SERVICES

### Advisory Services

Ars Logica is a vendor-neutral analyst firm helping companies evaluate their CXM and WCM requirements and select appropriate WCM software. To address clients' technology and process questions/problems that arise throughout the year, Ars Logica offers unlimited direct analyst access through its Analyst Anytime advisory services. These annual, subscription-based services provide guidance by phone or email within 24 hours on a wide range of issues. The number of inquiries submitted throughout the year is not limited.

### Software and Technology Selection

In our Software and Technology Selection engagements, Ars Logica maps clients' functional, technological, and strategic requirements to potential CXM and WCM solutions and identifies the software vendors whose products best satisfy these requirements. We maintain a continuously updated comprehensive matrix of the feature-functionality of most CXM and WCM vendors' products and solutions. We also receive frequent briefings from these vendors and have in-depth conversations and consulting engagements with their customers, ensuring that we always understand the actual state of vendors' offerings as well as their forward-looking strategic directions.

### Custom Engagements

Ars Logica's expertise in content management and related technologies such as digital asset management, records management, marketing campaign management, search, and portals, gives us the open-ended ability to help clients on a wide range of projects, including: building the internal business cases, assessing technology requirements, analyzing software products and vendors, selecting and assembling software solutions, crafting Web strategies, and running corporate educational seminars. We also assist vendors in developing strategic roadmaps, and we and present our view of the market at industry conferences and end-user events.

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