

Opscode Chef supports Windows shops as use, devops grow in the enterprise

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Opscode, the commercial supporter of the open source Chef server configuration and automation software, is extending support to **Microsoft** Windows infrastructure through its Chef cookbooks. The move comes amid growing use of private Chef, which has been offered as a hosted offering for early technology and Web 2.0-type companies among enterprises with mixed Windows-nix environments. We expect that more mainstream enterprises and those using Windows will be adopting Chef and similar tools as they increasingly embrace 'devops' – the fusion of application development and deployment.

The 451 take

We're not surprised to hear about increasing enterprise adoption of Chef and devops, and this is no doubt a driver of Opscode's Windows support since most enterprise environments run a mix of Windows, Linux and Unix. The increased support for Chef automation in Windows environments is only likely to accelerate this trend, helping drive growth for vendors like Opscode. Competition, however, is also likely to intensify as Opscode's competitors, particularly Puppet Labs, similarly extend support to Windows environments and larger enterprises.

Opscode has announced new software and Chef cookbooks to support Microsoft Windows environments and accompanying technology, including the deployment and automation of Windows PowerShell task framework, IIS Web server, SQL Server and Windows services. The company, which so far has grown its business mainly on hosted Chef supporting Linux and Unix servers, cites growing interest and demand from larger enterprises with mixed environments that include Windows. These enterprise organizations are primarily interested in a private version of Chef to manage their large numbers of servers, which tend to start in business divisions with hundreds of compute nodes and then scale up to thousands of nodes across the larger organization.

This is consistent with what we've predicted and seen in devops – the pushing together of enterprise application development and deployment of those applications via IT operations, whereby divisional use leads to broader implementation of devops and automation technologies, of which Opscode Chef is a primary piece. Organizations, increasingly enterprises in financial services, media, telecommunications and other verticals, can simplify and automate the deployment and scaling up of servers using Chef, which is open source and is also offered in paid versions as Hosted Chef or Private Chef. With the new Windows support via Chef cookbooks written in Ruby, Windows shops will be able to integrate a block of PowerShell script into the software; install IIS and configure Web applications;

manage SQL Server installation, configuration and updates; and automate tools for service management across all machines using Windows Services. In addition, the software bundles Ruby into the Chef Client Installer for windows so that installations are seamless.

Opscode, which has grown thanks largely to devops deployments among technology and Web 2.0 users, reports that larger enterprise interest and deals are coming from financial services, life sciences and media and entertainment companies. The company does not disclose its number of paying customers, but does report growth of both its Hosted Chef and now Private Chef clients, which number in the hundreds.

Competition

Though there appears to be ample greenfield opportunity in the market for both of them, Opscode Chef does compete with **Puppet Labs** and its similar, open source Puppet server configuration and automation framework. Opscode may be first in formally addressing Windows users, but there is some beta Windows support in Puppet 2.6 – management of user and group resources and use of Windows security identifiers – that was brought on by similar demand for Windows support among Puppet users.

Another vendor with similar technology is **CFEngine**, which is also open source. It benefits from greater maturity and having been in the market longer, but CFEngine is less often the choice for new deployments compared to Chef and Puppet. Nevertheless, the latest enterprise release of CFEngine 3 Nova also features added Windows support featuring more granular management of Windows servers and desktops as well as native control of Windows Registry, Windows Services and access control lists.

Opscode also vies with larger systems management providers, including **BMC, CA Technologies, Hewlett-Packard** and **IBM**. Though Opscode has primarily focused on managing Linux and Unix servers, the new support for Windows also means competition with Microsoft. Additional rivals include **CohesiveFT, ManageIQ** and **Quest Software's Surgient**.

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