

TECH CHOICES

February 3, 2005

Automated Functional Testing Vendor Profile: IBM's Rational Functional Tester

This is the fourth document in the "Automated Functional Testing Tools" series.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IBM Rational Functional Tester, recently re-engineered and relaunched as part of the Atlantic release of the IBM Software Development Platform, represents a significant step forward for Rational's line of software quality tools. IBM now offers one of the most powerful functional testing tools on the market — and for a very modest price. However, Functional Tester isn't for the faint of heart; rather, it's a power tool for power users. Functional Tester will win this audience over with its Java and Visual Basic .NET scripting and its integration with the Eclipse and Microsoft Visual Studio .NET development environments.

IBM RATIONAL IS POISED TO TAKE ON MERCURY INTERACTIVE

Forrester evaluated IBM Rational Functional Tester against 84 criteria (see Figure 1). Functional Tester is based on the Eclipse architectural framework and the Eclipse test, trace, and monitoring project, Hyades. Functional Tester is also well-integrated with the IBM Software Development Platform as a whole, making it very attractive for shops that use other IBM tools.¹ While Functional Tester is one of the most powerful tools on the market, it's not one of the easiest for nontechnical testers to use. Functional Tester is a good bet for these three user groups:

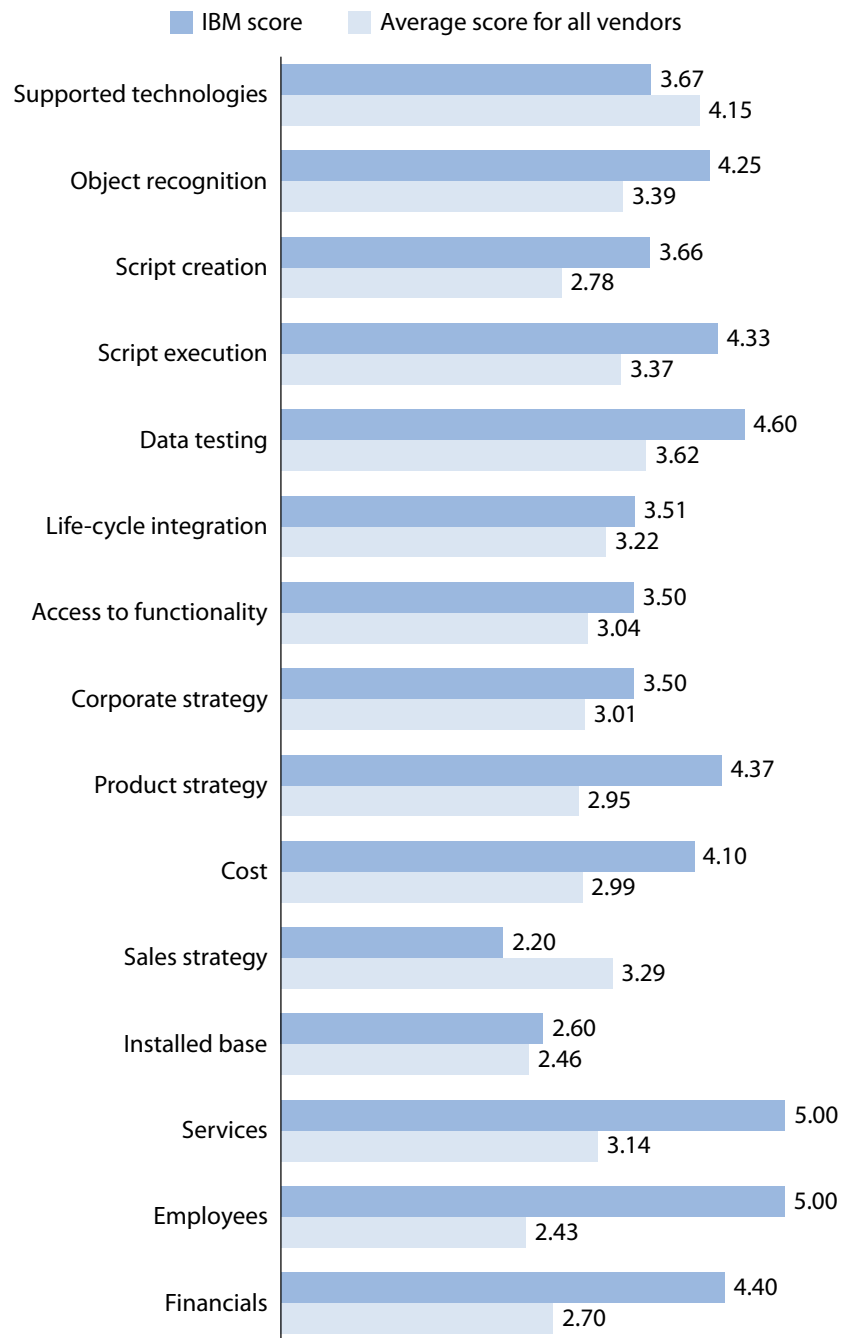
- **Testers with development experience, as well as developers themselves.** Functional Tester has more advanced features for those with strong programming skills than any other functional testing tool on the market. Its Java and Visual Basic .NET scripting and its thorough integration with both Eclipse and Microsoft Visual Studio .NET are particularly attractive. While other vendors try to tack IDE-like functionality onto their functional testing tools, IBM cuts to the chase by integrating with the IDEs themselves. Functional Tester is an especially good match for testers who work closely with development teams.²
- **Manual testers.** Rational Functional Tester ships with a complimentary copy of Rational Manual Tester, which helps testers create, manipulate, and maintain test scripts that are built out of modular, reusable test components. IBM will eventually join Manual Tester and Functional Tester to ease the transition from manual to automated testing. Once fully joined, these two products will take keyword-driven testing to a new level.



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Figure 1 IBM's Automated Functional Testing Tool Scorecard Summary



Source: February 3, 2005, Tech Choices "Evaluating Automated Functional Testing Tools"

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

- **Eventually, operations analysts.** IBM's increasing use of open standards and the integration of its life-cycle tools will ultimately help it bridge the gap between predeployment testing and post-deployment monitoring.³ It does this by ensuring that its tools use a common test profile (for example, the UML 2 Test Profile), data model (such as Hyades), and method of data interchange (e.g., XMI) so that they can share assets across the life cycle. Many vendors claim to be moving in this direction, but IBM is uniquely positioned to execute on this vision.

To see how Rational Functional Tester stacks up against six competing tools, see the Forrester Wave™ evaluation of automated functional testing tools.⁴

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The IBM Software Development Platform includes all of IBM's requirements and analysis, design and construction, software quality, software configuration management, process and project management, and deployment management tools.
- ² Functional Tester's use of Java and VB.NET for scripting will enable testers and developers to better communicate by ensuring that they speak a common language. And when developers use Eclipse or Eclipse-based development tools, testers and developers will also have a user interface in common, as Functional Tester's UI is Eclipse-based.
- ³ The two-year-old Hyades open source project — formally known as the Eclipse Test and Performance Tools Platform project — is an integrated testing, tracing, and monitoring platform. The benefits of this approach are so compelling that it won't be long before IBM isn't the only vendor with tools built around Hyades. The spread of this framework will result in the following benefits for users: better tool integration; easier tool and process customization; and less vendor lock-in. See the October 8, 2004, Quick Take "What Hyades Means For IBM, Its Customers, And Its Competitors."
- ⁴ Forrester evaluated automated functional testing tools to tease out the differences between offerings in this relatively mature market. Our findings: Mercury Interactive's QuickTest Professional is the most capable tool on the market today, with IBM Rational Functional Tester close behind. In the middle of the pack are Compuware and Segue Software, which are both well-established players, as well as Empirix and RadView Software, which are vendors of specialized Web testing tools. See the February 3, 2005, Tech Choices "Evaluating Automated Functional Testing Tools."