IBM i Modernization Engine for LifeCycle Integration (Merlin)

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the official name of the product?
The name of the product is *IBM i Modernization Engine for Lifecycle Integration*. We abbreviate it as Merlin.

Q: Is this a new Licensed Program Product (LPP)?
A: It is a new member of the IBM i Portfolio of products, but it is not a traditional LPP. Merlin is acquired through IBM Passport Advantage and the IBM Entitled Registry as a Certified Container.

Q. What is Merlin?
A. Merlin is a new modern IBM i development and modernization environment. It integrates the latest development and DevOps processes into a single product for an IBM i developer. Merlin aligns IBM i application development with the evolving standards around Jenkins, Git, and browser-based Thea IDE (Visual Studio Code compatible). Additionally, it integrates key modernization features such as converting fixed format RPG code into free format RPG code and application impact analyses.

Q. What market does Merlin address?
 A. The Merlin solution is a tool for application development and modernization. While it is applicable to all developers, Merlin enables IBM i clients to take advantage of the move towards the cloud including on-the-fly provisioning of development and test environments. IBM i is often a key platform for financial services, logistics, healthcare, and manufacturing companies and developers in these industries are excited to work with Merlin.

Q. Who is paid to sell Merlin?
Merlin is an IBM Power product. IBM Power sellers (IBM and Business Partners) are compensated for selling Merlin to their customers.

Merlin is not a traditional LPP. It is acquired through IBM Passport Advantage and the IBM Entitled Registry, not through e-Config. Please check the announcement letters for part numbers.[1]

Q. How is Merlin priced?

Merlin is priced per "developer". Because Merlin runs inside the Redhat OpenShift Container Platform (OCP), Merlin uses the built-in license monitoring tool, based on VPC (Virtual Processor Core). Customers wishing to acquire entitlement to Merlin will order 1 VPC unit per developer, generating 1 codeready workspace for each developer. The price is $4500.00 per VPC. **[1]

Q. Is this a good market for IBM?

Absolutely. IBM i clients often think of IBM first. Merlin contains many distributed tools such as Azure, BitBucket, GitLab, GitHub and Jenkins. Merlin provides a complete enterprise Solution, including support. This gives IBM a unique advantage in offering the total solution including the IBM i platform itself and support for languages like RPG, Cobol, CLP, SQL, etc.

Q. What size are Merlin deals?

It is impossible to be precise but they typically range from $50K to $1M. The size of the deal will be dependent on the number of developers amongst other factors.

Q. Is there any presales resource to help me with the sales process?

Yes, IBM can help with presales support. ARCAD also provides both sales and presales support for sales opportunities. There are materials – Data Sheet, video demos, VITO letters, etc – located in the IBM i Seismic website as well as on the Arcad website.

ARCAD has a Merlin sandbox available in the cloud to demonstrate the entire CI/CD pipeline together with GitLab and UrbanCode. ARCAD contact is Andrew Ireland (aireland@arcadsoftware.com)

Q. What marketing and enablement material is available?

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[1] All prices are in US Dollars and represent prices on 7/7/2021. IBM reserves the right to change pricing without notice. All statements regarding IBM's future direction and intent are subject to change or withdrawal without notice and represent goals and objectives only.

A. Seismic will have marketing and enablement content. Please see the [product page](#) as well.

Q. Is there technical material about Merlin is available ?
A. The IBM i support pages are kept current with the latest information details.[i] https://www.ibm.com/support/pages/ibm-i-modernization-engine-lifecycle-integration-merlin-overview

Q. Do clients require services from IBM for this solution?
A. Clients who are looking at delivering an IBM i DevOps pipeline will benefit from services to support the implementation. Both IBM Lab Services and ARCAD (can be via Blue Dollars) can deliver these services.

Q. How should I progress deals with clients?
If you are wondering which clients with whom you should have a Merlin conversation, please listen to one of the many webcasts recorded in May regarding target audiences. These are on the Seismic website, as well as in the WW Spotlight database.
If the discussion is beginning, please refer to the sales enablement materials in Seismic.
When you reach the next stage, please direct your inquiries to the IBM and ARCAD support teams who will help you determine the appropriate next steps.

Q: Do I need to have OpenShift?
A: Yes, Merlin, the IBM Certified Container, runs in an OpenShift environment. The OpenShift environment can be located on a Power server. OpenShift could also reside in a Cloud instance, for example in IBM Cloud (IBM Power Virtual Servers) or in any cloud that supports OpenShift environments. For those clients with workload running in the Cloud already, it is a natural extension to add Merlin into an OpenShift environment also in the cloud.

Q: Are there prerequisites needed for the IBM i environment?
A: IBM i needs to be at IBM I 7.3 or more current with the latest HTTP PTF Group applied. Additionally, Rational Development Studio (5770-WDS) is required for the compilers so that source code can be compiled into object code.

Q: What's the Merlin IDE based on?
A: The IDE is leveraging RedHat Code Ready Workspaces, incorporating VS-Code compatible Eclipse Theia & Che for the core of the web based IDE.

Q: What kind of containers are supported? multi-architecture?
A: Merlin is targeted for RedHat OpenShift containers running on power or x86.

Q: What about debugging capabilities?
A:The debugger is a key part of a development environment and will be added to Merlin in the near term.

Q: Does this product allow IBM i applications to run inside a container?
A: No. IBM i Merlin is a **set of tools which run in OpenShift containers.** The tools guide and assist software developers in the modernization of IBM i applications and development processes, allowing them to realize the value of a hybrid cloud and multi-platform DevOps implementation.

Q: Does this replace RDi?
A: No, this is an alternative to using RDi for code development and modernization. Developers now have a choice of workstation based development activities, RDi, or to use a browser, container-based option, Merlin. Both are equally important to the IBM I development community and will continue to be enhanced and supported.
However, Merlin also includes many application modernization tools as well as CI/D products.

Q: What is the difference between Merlin and RDi?
A: Rational Developer for i (RDi) is an IDE for creating new application or updating existing native ILE applications on IBM i. Users can add plugin and additional tools to RDi to move toward a modern development ecosystem.
Merlin is a fully integrated and supported set of tools from IBM that include an IDE, and the additional plugins and tools to enable the IBMi developer to work in a modern manner. This includes Integration into a ci/cd pipeline, and code modernization features like fixed to free conversion, native integration for Git based source control and application impact analysis at the fingertips of every developer.

Q: Can code being updated by Merlin still be updated by RDi or SEU?
A: Yes, Code updated/modified/created using the Merlin capabilities can be modified by RDi. While it is possible to also use SEU to further modify the code, as Merlin supports the latest versions of RPG and SEU does not, it is the hope that developers will have moved to a more modern coding paradigm.

Q: Do customers pay extra to acquire the ARCAD functions?
No, those functions are integrated into the Merlin product.

Q: Why did IBM partner with Arcad Software?
 A: IBM and Arcad Software have had a long-standing partnership. Arcad had previously created plug-ins to the architecture being designed. To deliver the best value to the market as fast as possible, IBM chose to work with Arcad to deliver a product with an integrated RPG modernization and impact analysis.

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