Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform

Community offering versus enterprise offering

"We realized we needed enterprise technology that could support a cultural shift to an automation-centric approach for our DevOps teams, in addition to lower costs and better reusability, we also needed a vendor-agnostic solution that avoided regression of around 150 proprietary scripts."

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Executive summary

The AWX project and Red Hat® Ansible® Automation Platform are both open source tools for IT automation and orchestration, but they have some key differences to discuss.

To briefly introduce these 2 open source tools, the AWX Project is an upstream project with a community-driven support model, a potentially speedier release cycle, and highly advanced features. Ansible Automation Platform is the commercial offering that provides enterprise-grade support, refined, security-focused and stable features, and uninterrupted integration with Red Hat's ecosystem, keeping customers at the forefront of innovation, without taking on the risks that come with using a community version for their enterprise.

From licensing, documentation and support, to release cycles, user-interfacing, and integration with the larger Red Hat ecosystem, there are many factors to take into consideration when comparing which option best fits your business needs. These additional features and support options in Ansible Automation Platform can help reduce operational overhead, improve efficiency, and provide a more robust and scalable automation platform for enterprise environments.

Opportunity

The decision to move from the AWX project to Ansible Automation Platform depends on several factors, including the underlying technologies, markets, and industry challenges. The aim of this overview is to outline the primary differences between AWX and Ansible Automation Platform.

Underlying technology

- **AWX and Ansible Automation Platform.** Both are built on top of Ansible, an open source automation framework, which allows for a more simplified configuration management, application deployment, and orchestration across a variety of systems.
- **AWX.** The upstream project for Ansible, automation controller (formerly Red Hat Ansible Tower), which provides a web-based user interface, job scheduling, and multi-tenant support for Ansible. It offers features like access control, centralized logging, and notifications.
- **Ansible Automation Platform.** The downstream Red Hat offering which includes more than 20 Ansible upstream projects, one of which is AWX, and includes additional features, enhancements, and support options—providing enterprise certified content, security, compliance, and scalability.

Industry challenges

- **Enterprise adoption.** Ansible Automation Platform is targeted towards enterprises and organizations that require robust security, stability, compliance, and management features.
- **Support and professional services.** Ansible Automation Platform offers commercial support, consulting, training and certification, and professional services, which can be crucial for organizations that require timely assistance, guidance, and customization options.

- **Security and compliance.** Ansible Automation Platform provides additional security features, such as SAML-based single sign-on (SSO), role-based access control (RBAC), signing capabilities, and certificate-based authentication.
- **Scalability:** As organizations grow and their automation needs expand, scalability becomes a critical challenge. Ansible Automation Platform offers enhanced scalability features, such as clustering and load balancing, which can handle large-scale automation deployments effectively.
- **Governance and auditability.** Managing and tracking automation activities across an organization becomes more complex as the number of automation tasks and users increases. Ansible Automation Platform provides enhanced governance and auditability features to address these challenges, such as activity logging, reporting, and compliance monitoring.

Technology solutions and advantages

Community-driven solutions are supported, documented, released, interfaced, and integrated with other products in different ways. Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform takes advantage of the innovative, bleeding-edge benefits available in AWX and provides stable, security-focused, and reliable solutions for our customers.

Licensing, documentation and support

- AWX is the open source project that serves as the upstream version of automation controller. AWX is freely available and community-supported, which means you can use it without any licensing costs. Documentation, forums, and community-driven resources are available, however, official support and additional features may not be available from the project directly.
- Ansible Automation Platform offers enterprise support and is part of the Red Hat portfolio, providing official support, security updates, performance testing and additional features. You can access documentation, knowledge base articles, and seek assistance from Red Hat's support team for any issues or queries.

Release cycle

- AWX releases are often more frequent and follow a different cadence compared to Ansible Automation Platform. Most releases incorporate experimental features and changes that are still being tested for stability and suitability for production environments.
- Ansible Automation Platform, as a commercial product, follows a standardized release cycle determined by Red Hat. New features, bug fixes, and security updates are released according to Red Hat's schedule, ensuring stability and long-term support.

User interfacing

- AWX offers a similar user interface as Ansible Automation Platform, but it may lack some of the advanced features and integrations found in Ansible Automation Platform.
- Ansible Automation Platform provides a polished and refined user interface designed for enterprise environments, and includes Ansible automation hub, and the new Event-Driven Ansible controller webUI. It is geared towards ease of use, scalability, and integration with other Red Hat products as well as our partner's, and includes additional features and integrations that are specific to the commercial version.

Integration with Red Hat ecosystem

- AWX can integrate with various tools and systems, however, it does not have the same level of prebuilt integrations and native support for the Red Hat ecosystem of products.
- Ansible Automation Platform is tightly integrated with other Red Hat products and provides smooth integration within the broader Red Hat ecosystem, such as Red Hat Satellite for system provisioning and management, and Red Hat Insights for proactive monitoring and remediation.

As important as it is to consider automation for reducing your organization's operational overhead, it's just as important to review the hidden costs associated with maintaining the upstream community version of AWX—in comparison to the trusted enterprise ready platform in Ansible Automation Platform. Project requirements and budget often overlook the comparative hours spent on staffing and training, as well as building, safeguarding and maintaining a solution from the community versus an enterprise option. Though using the community version may look like a lower price tag on paper, depending on the requirements, your project is likely to cost much more over the long term. Consider also the risk involved with running a community version in production.

Red Hat approach

Red Hat has developed several portfolio architectures that help visualize how our customers are actively using Ansible Automation Platform, and integrating it with other products to gain full advantage of the entire Red Hat ecosystem.

The following architectures are built from tested solutions deployed with our customers, and actively in production, and are intended to create a baseline foundation for understanding practical applications for our products, and how they work not just within our own ecosystem, but with other products and technologies.

Smart management for SAP: SAP workloads are critical to a company and the maintenance windows are often very strict, sometimes making it difficult for the system administrators to finish updates and maintenance tasks properly and on time. This solution manages security, policy and patches for all servers in the SAP ecosystem (on-premise, public, private and hybrid cloud), ensuring they are compliant with SAP and Red Hat recommendations throughout their life cycle.

Event-driven automation: With the growing complexity of our modern infrastructures, the importance of automating our day-to-day operations to avoid the costly overhead spent on maintaining this complex environment is increasing rapidly. From something as simple as pushing a configuration change in response to changing security regulations, to something more serious such as recognizing and responding to a security threat or emergency, it is more important than ever that these responses happen as fast as possible, and are consistent and reliable across the entire organization.

Self-healing infrastructure: Modern application development has become increasingly more complex because it is powerful and easier to consume. Keeping the infrastructure safe and compliant is a challenge for many organizations. One of the most powerful approaches to infrastructure management today is the combination of using historical data-driven insights and automation tools for applying remediation across a scaling estate of hosts in a targeted and prioritized manner.

Explore to learn more

For more architecture examples of how our customers are using Red Hat products to overcome their business challenges and adapt to dynamic technological requirements, visit Red Hat Portfolio Architecture Center.

Learn more about how and why we create these products to help solve real-world business challenges faced by customers and partners every day. We encourage everyone, regardless of background, to make suggestions for enhancements, contribute new architectures and ideas, and visit What is portfolio architecture page.

Visit Ansible vs. Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform for additional information about the different versions of Ansible.

About Red Hat

Red Hat helps customers standardize across environments, develop cloud-native applications, and integrate, automate, secure, and manage complex environments with award-winning support, training, and consulting services.

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