



Collaborative Product Evaluations

Ideas International's (IDEAS) **Collaborative Product Evaluations** perform detailed technology comparisons with the transparency of an open source process.

Buyers considering the acquisition of complex technology products sometimes face difficult choices. As market segments mature and established competitors emerge, products gain an increasingly broad and diverse set of functional capabilities, which customers must try to match with their specific requirements. In order to choose the solution that best meets their needs, buyers must weigh the functional tradeoffs between similar products – often a daunting and challenging task. In particular, obtaining accurate information about the true functional capabilities of the products being evaluated can be difficult. In their marketing, product vendors tend to highlight their strongest features and obscure weaker ones.

Customers who are already using a particular product probably have the best understanding of how well it works.

They are thus in a position to provide the most accurate information about the quality of the product's features. The web makes it possible to connect directly with users who are willing to share information about their experiences with products. IDEAS is using a new web-based, community-driven technology called Collaborative Product Evaluation (CPE) to enable users to cooperate with each other in the evaluation of IT products and services with complex feature sets. CPE leverages the community both to collect information about the quality of individual features, and to determine which features are most important.



actionable intelligence
www.ideasinternational.com

Key Features

- » CPE represents product capabilities as a hierarchical taxonomy of features, plus a set of products providing those features. The taxonomy and product set are jointly defined by IDEAS analysts and sponsoring vendors.
- » Through a CPE website, any user (or vendor) can contribute ratings for specific features of a product, along with a written explanation of the rating, representing his/her assessment of the quality of that feature's implementation. IDEAS analysts seed the CPE site with baseline ratings for each product derived from their own internal assessments. All submitted ratings are immediately visible to the public.
- » CPE uses a reputation-based mechanism called distributed moderation to optimize the quality of ratings that are submitted, whereby a select subset of community members

is automatically given a limited opportunity to moderate the ratings submitted by others. Users with moderation privileges can boost or lower the "score" of ratings based on the credibility of their explanations. The relative scarcity of moderation privileges increases the incentive for members to moderate ratings when given the opportunity. Consumers of the evaluation can then globally select the credibility level at which they want to browse the ratings.

- » Users who register with the CPE site can also assign weights to any level of functionality, representing the importance of that feature or feature set in their own environment. CPE then uses these weights to composite moderated feature ratings into customized summary ratings for each product, reflecting the suitability of each product for a particular user's requirements.

Target Audience

IDEAS Collaborative Product Evaluations are relevant to both vendors and end users:

- » Users can take advantage of CPE to determine which products best meet their unique requirements, and if they choose to, they can establish their expertise in the community by contributing ratings.
- » Vendors gain insights into the true capabilities of products, without any marketing spin, both in their own offerings and in those of their competitors. Sponsoring vendors also gain valuable insights into which features users truly consider important, independently of any filtering that might arise in internal studies.

Compare. Contribute. Customize.

- > Compare products at multiple levels of functionality
- > Contribute ratings for specific product functions
- > Customize evaluations based on your functional preferences

Fig 1 – Collaborative Product Evaluation: Learn which product is best for your needs.

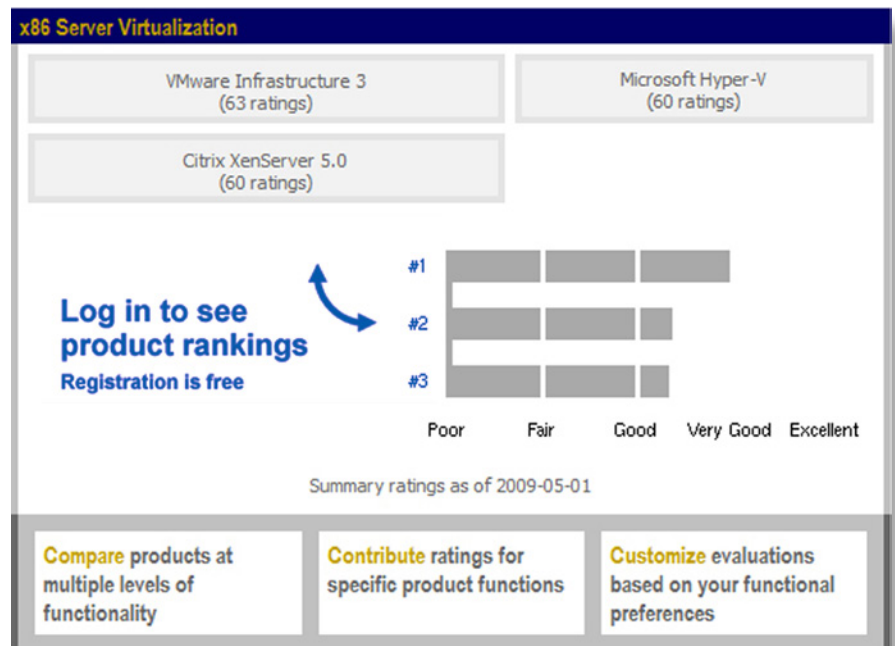


Fig 2 – Compare: Product comparisons at arbitrary levels of detail.

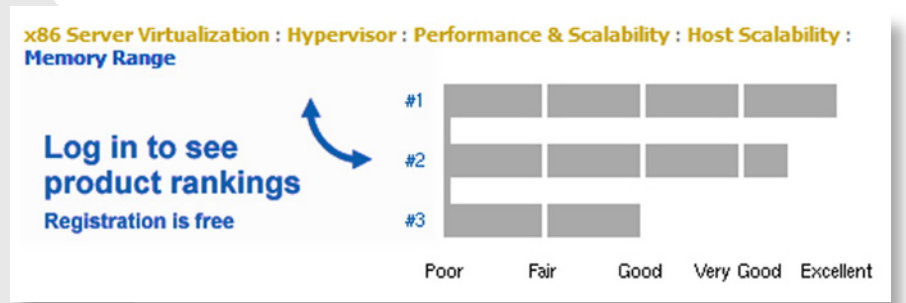


Fig 3 – Contribute: Registered users can submit ratings that are qualified through distributed moderation.

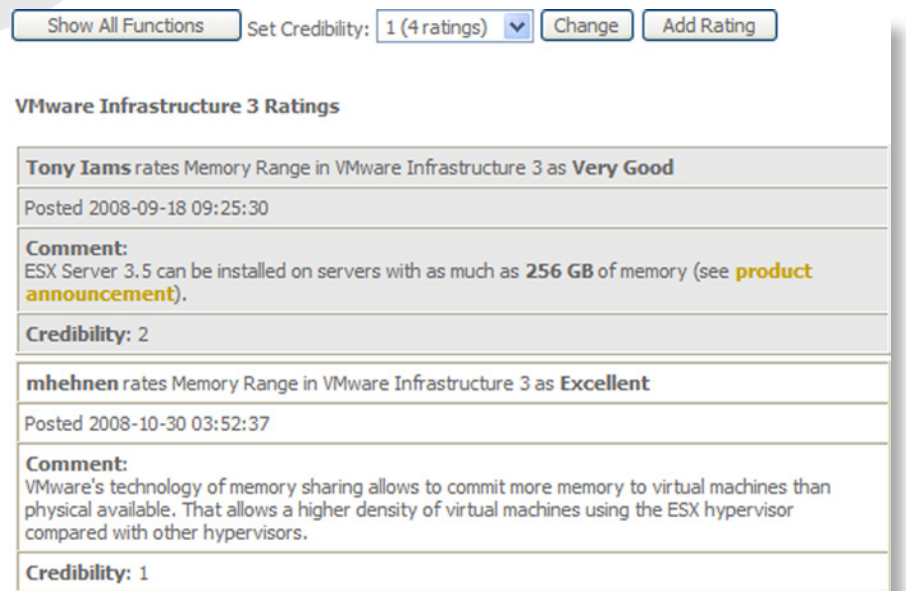
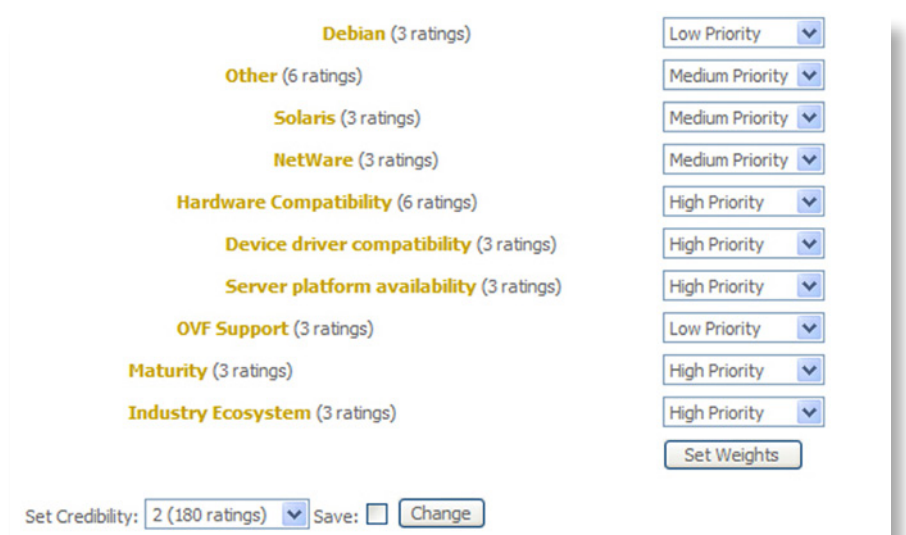


Fig 4 – Customize: Registered users can specify weight for any function based on importance.



Sponsorship Benefits

Vendors have the opportunity to sponsor CPE projects, which allows them to work directly with IDEAS on structuring the evaluations and processing the results. Specific benefits of sponsorship include the following:

- » Input on the high-level functional categories and specific features that should be included in the CPE site
- » Commitment from IDEAS to update the CPE site to reflect the sponsor's new product releases for the duration of sponsorship (i.e., add features that are introduced by new products, and back-fill analysts' baseline ratings of those features in competing products)
- » Visibility of all weights that users set in the sponsored CPE site for the duration of sponsorship
- » Option for IDEAS to produce vendor-specific derivative material (i.e. white papers, internal competitive positioning guidance) based on findings from the CPE site

Past Evaluations

The CPE methodology is most valuable for evaluating products and services that have a deep and diverse set of functional capabilities, whereby the true quality of these capabilities may only emerge during actual use, rather than during inspection of marketing literature and data sheets.

Past evaluations have covered:

- » x86 Server Virtualization
- » Midsize Blade Servers
- » UNIX Operating Systems

About Ideas International

Ideas International (IDEAS) is the leading global supplier of comparative intelligence on enterprise IT infrastructure. Servicing both IT vendors and large-scale IT users, IDEAS products focus on: servers; storage; virtualization and consolidation; and software and infrastructure services. IDEAS online

products are backed up by expert industry analysts who can also deliver specialized advisory and consulting services.

For more information about Ideas International, please visit:

www.ideasinternational.com



Americas

Ideas International, Inc.
800 Westchester Avenue
Suite N337
Rye Brook, NY 10573-1354
USA

Tel +1 914 937 4302
Fax +1 914 937 2485

Asia/Pacific and Worldwide Headquarters

Ideas International Limited
Level 3
20 George Street
Hornsby, NSW 2077
Australia

Tel +61 2 9472 7777
Fax +61 2 9472 7788

Europe, Middle East, Africa

Ideas International Europe
Milton Park Innovation Centre
99 Milton Park
Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RY
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0) 1235 841 510
Fax +44 (0) 1235 841 511