ADVIZANT

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Death, Taxes, but Not Oracle Software Support

Why your Oracle support bill is not a fact of life.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I have seen companies overspend on Oracle by tens of millions of dollars, over years and even decades.

Your Oracle support bill is not a fixed cost. It is a choice you have been making by default.

Companies with the same Oracle footprint can pay four times different support fees. Nobody did anything wrong, and the one paying more usually has no idea why, what to do about it, or the confidence to act.

How much you can recover depends less on your contract than on your willingness to act.

This paper explains how the overspend happens, why nobody inside your company catches it, and why your options are far wider than staying with Oracle or leaving.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued)

- **Nobody caused it.** Decades of small, sensible purchases, annual uplifts of 4 to 8 percent, and consolidation into single support lines compound into a badly priced estate.
- **Nobody catches it.** No one owns the whole estate. Attention arrives with the invoice, but the window to change it opens 6 to 9 months earlier.
- **Oracle runs on the honor system.** No license keys, no phone home. Oracle knows only what you tell it, and most companies volunteer too much information.
- **Oracle has changed.** It is no longer the Oracle it was from the 1990s through the early 2020s. Its attention is on cloud and its debt, not on auditing your on-premises estate, and it deals more readily than it used to.
- **The options are wider than you think.** Oracle's re-pricing policy makes trimming shelfware save nothing, so every choice looks all-or-nothing. It isn't. There are at least nine options between staying put and leaving.
- **The usual objections miss the point.** Security, feature access, legal risk and the vendor relationship are arguments for having support, not for overpaying for it.
- **The first step is low-risk.** A commercial analysis of what you already pay needs no system access and tells Oracle nothing. If your pricing is strong, stop there.

1 Same software, four times the price

Two companies can run the same Oracle estate and pay four times different support fees. Neither did anything wrong, and the one paying more usually has no idea why, what to do about it, or the confidence to act.

There is no benchmark on your invoice and Oracle does not publish what your peers pay. So your number arrives every year looking like a fact of nature.

It isn't. It is the residue of decades of reasonable decisions nobody revisited. The ceiling on what you can recover is not set by your contract or by Oracle's policies. It is set by your nerve.

2 How a reasonable estate becomes an expensive one

No single bad deal did this. Five mechanisms compound quietly over decades, and the last one locks the result in place.

- **The uplift.** Support rises 4 to 8 percent a year. Over a decade that roughly doubles the bill for software that hasn't changed.
- **Stacked small deals.** Smaller purchases get smaller discounts. Twenty modest deals over fifteen years carry twenty modest discounts, forever, because support is priced off the original net license figure.
- **Buying to policy, not contract.** Much of what Oracle publishes about licensing isn't in your agreement. Customers who follow the policy buy more than the contract requires, then pay support on the excess.

- **Inertia.** Bureaucracy, competing priorities and lack of attention let the waste continue year after year.
- **Consolidation.** Poorly priced contracts get folded into one support line, often through an unlimited agreement or an enterprise metric like employee count. The bad pricing disappears from view and can no longer be removed piece by piece.

3 Why nobody catches it

No one owns the Oracle estate as a whole, and every role that touches it is measured on something other than its cost. By the time the invoice arrives, the chance to change it has passed.

Role	What they're paid to do	Effect on your support bill
IT executives	Keep the lights on, bring innovation	Oracle risk is career risk; cost is someone else's line
IT managers	Execute the operational work	Whatever runs must keep running
Technicians	Make the technology work	Don't care what it costs, and shouldn't have to
Procurement and contracts	Spend the money, with small wins	Settle for a concession Oracle is happy to give
Legal	Avoid exposure	Conservative by design; Oracle's reputation does the rest

When procurement does question the number, it gets routed to people without the time or expertise to answer, and it dies.

The window to change an annual invoice opens 6 to 9 months before it arrives. That is when nobody is thinking about Oracle. Oracle, meanwhile, works your account all year.

4 The honor system

Oracle can only calculate what you owe from information you give it. Most companies volunteer too much information, and many enforce Oracle's policies against themselves.

- **No keys, no phone home.** Oracle software doesn't meter you or report usage. Nothing reaches Oracle unless you approve and send it.
- **Your leverage is informational.** Every architecture answer on a support call, every environment walkthrough with a sales engineer, every spreadsheet filled in as a favor hands Oracle the math.
- **Customers think Oracle is there to help.** So they answer cooperatively, outside any negotiation, with nobody in the room whose job is to notice.
- **Contract is not policy.** A term you signed binds you. A policy Oracle published is a counterparty's preference about how to read that term. Much of what passes for compliance is deference to the second.

I'm not your ethical compass. But I will tell you when you're applying Oracle's preferences against yourself, and what it costs you each year.

5 Why cutting shelfware saves nothing

Drop unused products and Oracle re-prices what remains, so your bill barely moves. This single policy makes every option look all-or-nothing, which is exactly what it's designed to do.

- **How it works.** Remove product or quantity, and Oracle forfeits your discount on what's left. Less software, same payment.
- **Why it matters.** Small cuts appear pointless, so only enormous moves look worth making, and no CIO, CISO or GC approves those on a Tuesday.
- **What actually moves Oracle.** Oracle runs a retention team whose job is to keep support revenue. It will bend, sometimes break, its own policies for customers who have demonstrated real willingness to leave. That means acting, not threatening.

6 Oracle has changed

The Oracle that built its reputation on aggressive audits from the 1990s through the early 2020s is not the Oracle you negotiate with today. The rules shifted, and most customers haven't noticed.

- **Its attention has moved.** Oracle carries roughly $440 billion of debt, lease liabilities and committed obligations to fund its data center buildout. Its focus is cloud deals and license-included subscriptions. Every audit and aggressive sales cycle it could run across its on-premises base is a rounding error by comparison.
- **The audit machine is winding down.** The retribution audit, the fear that cutting support invites an auditor, is a scare story from another era. Cancel support today and your rep may keep calling, but a retaliatory audit is now the exception rather than the rule.
- **Oracle deals more than it used to.** Ten years ago Oracle would let a customer walk rather than bend its policies. Today it escalates that customer to the retention team and negotiates.
- **Knowing your estate is now leverage, not a shield.** License management used to be a defensive discipline. Today the same knowledge is what you bring to the negotiating table.

7 Not stay or leave: a ladder of options

Third-party support vendors taught the market to see a binary: stay with Oracle or leave. In reality there are at least nine options in between, and most customers land on the third or fourth rung.

The binary serves Oracle. Put "leave Oracle support" in front of your leadership and you'll get a reasonable no, and the invoice renews.

The options differ on how much you save, how fast, and how much appetite each requires. Without the mechanics:

- Restructuring which entity pays, and what it carries
- Replacing what you need at today's price, not 2011's
- Ending an unlimited agreement early and certifying out, to cut the support tied to it
- Moving portions to models where the license is included

- Oracle's own cloud programs that turn support spend into credits
- Time-boxed periods off Oracle support, with a path back
- Self-supporting portions you're already entitled to support yourself
- Letting specific contracts lapse and negotiating the return
- Declining, by contract, what Oracle's policies ask of you

Most customers keep every capability they care about and take a material number off the bill. The difference is they choose the rung instead of being told there's only one.

8 The five objections you'll hear

Most objections that come up in the room are arguments for having Oracle support. None of them is an argument for overpaying for it.

Who	What they'll say	What's actually true
CISO	AI finds vulnerabilities faster than ever; support at any price is worth it	The customer paying 4x gets the same patches as the one paying market rate. Security justifies the entitlement, not the price.
Business line owners	We need updates, new modules, new features	Also about entitlement. Worth asking which features from the last three years you actually adopted.
General counsel	Oracle is litigious; this sounds risky	The line is contract language you signed. Everything else is policy and reputation. Caution that can't tell them apart is a subsidy to your vendor.
Software asset managers	We've invested in a tool and a process, and we're already rationalizing our licensing	They're paid to play by the rules, not to question them, and never actually achieve bona fide compliance. A tool shows what's deployed, not what you should pay.
CIO	We have a relationship with Oracle worth preserving	Oracle has quarterly targets and a team built to keep your money. You can have a good relationship and pay market rate.

The CIO's belief is the most expensive one on the list, because it's the one that stops the conversation before it starts.

9 Your ceiling is your nerve

Analysis tells you what's possible. Your appetite for acting decides what you actually save. Two companies with identical findings will land in very different places.

The largest recoveries go to organizations willing to work on a 12 to 24 month horizon and make moves Oracle notices. It took decades to build your estate. It takes more than one renewal to reset it.

If this makes you want to know your number, we'll probably work well together. If it makes you want reassurance that everything is fine, I'm the wrong advisor.

What I bring

- **Thirty years in the Oracle ecosystem**, including inside Oracle. Tens of millions of dollars of support cut with no operational change.
- **Independence.** No Oracle partnership, no resale, no implementation practice, no referral fees.
- **Both halves of the problem.** Technical depth to challenge your own team, and hundreds of contracts seen, so I know where the contractual line actually sits.
- **Control of the information flow.** I stand between you and Oracle.
- **Accountability.** I stand behind the analysis and execution with a multi-year license and vendor management strategy.

How I work

- **Paid from savings, not hours.** No time and materials. Find nothing, owe nothing.
- **Your call on risk.** I'll show you the line and what sits on each side. Where you stand is your decision.
- **Honest about fit.** I'll tell you when your pricing is already good.

10 Find your number

There is a real gap between what you pay and what a well-advised buyer would pay for the same entitlement today. The first step to finding it requires no system access and tells Oracle nothing.

1. **Commercial analysis.** Support is priced off your original net license figures, so it's straightforward arithmetic to show how well each line item, contract and product is discounted. If pricing is strong, we stop and you leave it alone.
2. **Usage and right-sizing.** Only if the pricing is weak: what you actually use, compared against a right-sized, properly discounted estate.
3. **Strategy.** The top three to five options, with what each saves and what each asks of you.

The question isn't whether you're overpaying. It's by how much, and how far you're willing to go to get it back.

What's your number?

I can tell you in ten minutes.

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ABOUT ADVIZANT

Advizant is an independent, founder-led Oracle cost recovery advisory with three decades of experience negotiating for and against Oracle and no Oracle channel relationships. It is not a third-party support provider, a license reseller, or a system integrator. Rimini Street and Spinnaker Support move you off Oracle support; Advizant advises on whether to leave or stay, prepares you for the move, or negotiates your return. Engagements scale from a thirty-minute sounding board on the deal in front of you, to a two-week diagnostic that puts a number on your exposure, to a multi-year managed cost recovery program in which fees attach to realized savings.