

Yet Another Performance Profiling Method (Or YAPP-Method)

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I. Introduction

Traditional Oracle database performance tuning methodologies based on ratios are quickly becoming outdated and unusable as applications and databases continue to grow significantly across varying types of businesses. The "Ratio Tuning" technique involves finding bad ratios (e.g., the buffer cache hit ratio, latch-hit ratio) and addressing each separately. This technique is very simple and straightforward, but becomes ineffective as systems become more complex. Additionally, ratio tuning implies that the whole system consists of identical components, but large workflow applications may contain a single bottleneck within its design. Such a bottleneck rarely surfaces immediately when following the traditional tuning approach. Therefore, a more holistic approach is needed to better understand and tune these large and complex mission critical systems. This involves first reviewing all relevant data (i.e., the ratios and other relevant information) and then planning a course of action that focuses attention on the bigger impact issues.

This paper will discuss a simple holistic method. In addition, you will understand why tuning the application and SQL statements will have a much greater impact on overall performance than other components.

II. Definitions

Since the definition of common terms tend to differ depending on the context of the topic, it is imperative that we clearly define the terms referenced in this paper. Some definitions may appear simple, but the simplicity of this method makes it work successfully. This paper adheres to the saying, "Common sense before hard work" (first decide what direction to run, then start running).

The 80/20 Rule

The 80/20 rule, conceived by Vilfredo Pareto, underlies our tuning methodologies. It states that a minority of causes, inputs, or efforts usually produces a majority of the results, outputs, or rewards. This implies that there is a built in imbalance between causes and results, inputs and outputs, effort and reward. Although our tuning method primarily focuses on a small subset of the available performance statistics, the analyzed output and resultant tuning actions will provide the largest percentage of overall performance improvement. The goal is to simplify and exert the least amount of effort, while still achieving significant results.

Response time

In general terms, *response time* can be described as follows:

$$\text{Response Time} = \text{Service Time} + \text{Wait Time}$$

If *service time* and/or *wait time* is high, it will directly impact the total response time. The Oracle database dynamic views provides statistics that allow one to calculate the total service time and the total wait time within the database. However, the calculated response time will always be less than or equal to the actual response time observed by the end user. The difference is due to external forces, such as network latency or queuing latency (if TP monitors or Web Servers are used).

Scalability

As businesses and business needs grow, customers look for *scalable solutions*. The need for *scalability* (increased throughput) and/or *speedup* (faster response time) is quickly becoming a necessity in the world of complex systems. However, the following questions are rarely answered thoroughly:

- What is scalability?

- How is scalability and performance actually measured?
- What areas affect the ability to scale?

The answers are important since this will help to determine how well a system is currently performing and how well it can be expected to perform in the future as an application grows. A *scalable solution* is one that will allow a business application to grow in complexity and user base while continuing to perform within expected and projected guidelines.

There are 4 basic 'logical' areas where scalability can be examined:

- hardware
- operating system
- database
- application

It is also important to look at the 'physical' areas that affect scalability:

- network
- memory
- CPU
- I/O

Most performance issues do not originate directly from the database, so the question becomes – “Where is the problem?” We have found that more than 80% of them are rooted within the application due to bad design or inefficient implementations. From this, it can be seen that the highest percentage of performance improvements can be achieved by making changes in the application.

So, given this statement, why do people usually focus on the Oracle database? Generally, it is a victim of its capabilities. As a first effort, database administrators and users focus on the database since it supplies easy access to a wealth of statistics about its performance. In addition, application tuning may not be simple or straightforward. Applications are designed around business rules and processes. Sometimes, finding algorithms that fully conform to business rules while achieving optimal database performance is impossible or extremely difficult. Other reasons may be cost related, such as the discovery that a poorly designed application has already been implemented, either internally by a project team or externally through special consultants, and necessary changes will incur greater costs.

Example 1:

Consider a business rule dictating that every row inserted into a table must contain a unique, sequential number. If multiple transactions want to insert into the same table, the resulting application design can only allow one active transaction at a time. To guarantee continuousness, the next transaction must wait for the current transaction to commit or rollback before it can safely decide to either allocate the next sequence number or reuse the current one. The performance cost is that your transactions must run serially even if hardware resources are available to run more processes and the database engine is capable of managing many concurrent transactions.

Example 2:

A real life example may be a bank that requires the bank manager to approve each check cashed. If there are three tellers servicing customers who are all cashing checks but only one bank manager qualified to approve the checks, then this process will not scale well. The bank becomes serialized around the manager. The bank may consider hiring and training more managers, but that would increase business costs. A more cost-effective solution would be to relax the business rule that requires each check to be signed by the manager for approval. In this case, changing the business rule could yield better scalability at a lower cost.

Variables that affect scalability - How to monitor and measure

What affects *scalability*, and how can it be monitored and measured? Basically, the ability for an application to scale is directly affected by the synchronization of access to common resources. For example, only one process may modify a given row at one time. Other processes requesting to make a modification to the same row must wait for the first process to either commit or rollback. So the ability to scale will be affected by how often the application needs to synchronize (the amount of synchronization) and how expensive it is to synchronize (the cost of synchronization).

Therefore:

$$\text{Scalability} \leftarrow \text{Amount of Synchronization} \times \text{Cost of Synchronization}$$

(Note: the *Amount of Synchronization* may also be stated in terms of the *Rate of Synchronization*. *Amount* and *Cost* can actually be qualified in absolute terms, but it would be better to think of them in relative terms most of the time.)

Take the following example:

Given a computer system that does a certain amount of I/O at a certain cost per I/O. If the disk drives are upgraded from 4500 RPM to 5400 RPM models, the cost of an I/O is 20 percent cheaper and the total I/O scalability will improve by 20 percent.

In this example, one interprets the *Cost of Synchronization* as the *wait time*. Waiting on a resource that is being used by another session means another delay that can be added to the *total Cost of Synchronization*. Reducing the *wait time* could improve the scalability of the system. So:

$$\text{Cost of Synchronization} \rightarrow \text{Average Wait Time}$$

This means that if there is no wait time, the system could scale almost perfectly. It also follows that tuning a system to reduce the wait time can help achieve a significant performance and scalability improvement. This assumes that there is no "busy waiting". Busy waiting occurs when the process waiting for a resource consumes CPU when it should otherwise place itself on a wait queue. An example of "busy waits" is a process spinning while trying to acquire a latch.

One could interpret the *Amount of Synchronization* as the number of times a process waited. For Oracle processes, this can be found in the Oracle statistics as the *Total Waits* (`v$system_event` and `v$session_event`).

An example of synchronization would be a comparison between Oracle's single instance environment and the Oracle Parallel Server (OPS) environment. Within an Oracle single instance environment, synchronizing changes to blocks in the Oracle buffer cache can be managed through latches since the blocks being modified reside within a single node. However with OPS, synchronization requires expensive instance locks in order to coordinate access to common resources shared across multiple nodes and the disjoint buffer caches. Since locking in OPS becomes more expensive, the synchronization overhead increases. The following table compares the costs of different synchronization methods:

Type of synchronization	Cost ¹	Relative Cost
Latches	0.000001sec	1 sec
Enqueues	0.0001 sec	100 sec
Instance locks	0.01 sec	10000 sec

¹ The timings are fictional, it just illustrates that there is an order of magnitude difference between the synchronization costs for the different types of synchronization.

This table implies that when an application is migrated from single-instance Oracle to Oracle Parallel Server, the cost of synchronization will increase (the local enqueues will become global enqueues, or instance locks). Therefore, scalability will be affected. Two things can be done about this:

- reduce the *Cost* of synchronization
In this example, that will be difficult to accomplish as the cost of instance locks will be more or less fixed. The cost of synchronization will be reduced only when upgrading software, improving interconnects, or installing faster CPUs.
- reduce the *Amount* of synchronization
This is something that is tangible and can be affected by tuning or changing the application so that the *amount* of enqueues requested is reduced. A common approach to this is partitioning the application so users are not accessing the same set (partition) of data (resource).

The *Amount* and *Cost* of synchronization will directly affect the ability for an application to scale. Statistics from the operating system and Oracle can be used to determine what events are contributing most to the amount and cost of synchronization. The method using these tools will be described in the following sections.

III. Tuning Response Time

When discussing performance and tuning problems, it is important to remember that the primary goal can be one of the following (or both):

1. *Improve response times*

As stated before, *response time* is the sum of *service time* and *wait time*. Improving response time means reducing one or both of these components. Obviously, one begins by choosing the component with the largest room to tune. For example, if the service time is 20 percent of the total, improving it will not impact response time very much. If tuning efforts cut the service time by 50 percent, then this portion of the response time will only drop from 20 percent to around 10 percent. This implies overall response time may only improve by at most 10 percent. However, focusing effort to improve the wait time by 50 percent translates to a 40 percent increase in response time!

2. *Improve throughput*

This can be a bit more complicated. If an application is running out of available CPU on the system, there is a need to reduce the service time. A simple, but expensive solution would be to replace the existing CPUs with faster ones or add more CPUs. However, it is also possible to redesign each batch or user process to do more work. Another solution would be to reduce the wait time of the process, thus improving the overall response time. Once a process can complete each transaction quicker, it can execute more transactions over the same span of time.

It is important to identify the desired percentage of performance improvement. For example, a user may require a 30% response time or throughput improvement. Relying on older classes and papers, many DBAs and Support analysts calculate certain, well-known ratios and address those that are deemed "bad." Trying to improve these *bad ratios*, without considering how much the change will contribute to overall performance, usually will fail to provide noticeable improvement. For example, increasing the parameter `spin_count` may achieve a 5% performance gain (or even decrease performance further since the system might be already CPU-bound) whereas introducing more efficient SQL or redistributing I/O may achieve a 40% performance gain. Although rewriting an application or purchasing hardware may be expensive, determining the performance benefit before weighing the cost is also important. The following method can determine what events contribute the largest synchronization cost,

which can ultimately be related to the total response time for a user. So how can the Oracle response time be measured?

First, we must define the unit of work for which response time is being measured, and determine if this is being monitored at the instance level or session level. Based on the unit of work, the following views can be used to determine the total response time:

- `V$SYSSTAT` and `V$SYSTEM_EVENT` for the instance level
- `V$SESSTAT` and `V$SESSION_EVENT` for the session level

Determine for which level response time is being measured

The response time can be measured on the instance level (although this may be very rough and not precise enough) or the session level (not easily available if sessions have a short lifetime). The following is a closer look at the levels of response time calculations to use:

- **system/instance level**
Use the instance level if sessions logon/logoff frequently. This will result in a general overview of what could be wrong with the instance.
- **session level**
If sessions stay connected for a long time, looking at the session level is more beneficial. It will allow direct measurement of response times.

Set init.ora parameter TIMED_STATISTICS = true

Enabling `timed_statistics` is necessary to properly analyze the performance within Oracle. On most platforms, this feature introduces a small (2-3%) overhead, but returns the much greater benefit of enabling the determination of performance bottlenecks. Many sources of tuning information recommend disabling `timed_statistics` due to perceived overhead (which was larger on some older operating systems), but tuning a system without that valuable information becomes an almost impossible task. Note that as of Oracle7 R7.3, you can dynamically change the setting of `timed_statistics`: `alter system timed_statistics = TRUE` or `alter session timed_statistics = TRUE`

Calculate the total response time

This section covers how to retrieve the relevant statistics from the Oracle performance tables used to calculate total response time. To restate the original response time formula:

$$\text{Response Time} = \text{Service Time} + \text{Wait Time}$$

Service Time

The **service time** is equal to the statistic “*CPU used by this session*” which is shown through entries in `V$SYSSTAT` or `V$SESSTAT` by selecting for this event.

Use `v$statname` to assist in finding the correct statistic number for “*CPU used by this session*” for each platform and release. This event represents the total amount of CPU time used. (Note: `v$sysstat` does not include CPU used by the Oracle background processes and `v$sesstat` doesn't show the amount of CPU used per Oracle background process).

Instance level

```
select a.value "Total CPU time"
from v$sysstat a
where a.name = 'CPU used by this session';
```

Session level

```
select sid, a.value "Total CPU time"
from v$sesstat a
```

```

where a.statistic# = 12 // statistic # for 'CPU used by
                        this session' -> obtained from
                        v$statname

```

Some platforms may also provide Operating System (OS) specific statistics that better indicate how CPU time was used. For example:

OS User time

This will show the amount of user time used out of the total CPU time.

OS System time

This will indicate the amount of system time (for system calls) used out of the total CPU time.

Add *OS User time* and *OS System time* to get the total amount of CPU time used. Note that this will always be more than "*CPU used by this session*." The difference can be explained by how Oracle measures the CPU used by a session. Measurement occurs at a user call level. When the user call starts, a CPU time stamp is taken, and when the call completes, that time stamp is subtracted from the current CPU time. The granularity is 1/100 of a second. So, if the user call completes within 1/100 of a second, the difference will be 0. Additionally, some of the network interactions are not measured in "*CPU used by this session*". This means, for example, that some character set conversions and/or datagram packaging are not accounted for.

utlbstat/utlestat

This information can also be seen in a historical context using `utlbstat.sql` and `utlestat.sql` scripts. The output of these scripts calculates the '*CPU used by this session*' as the cumulative amount of CPU that all sessions have used during the sample period – so the name is rather misleading!

Wait Time

The **wait time** is recorded through entries in `V$SYSTEM_EVENT` or `V$SESSION_EVENT`, by summing the time waited for all the events excluding those waited for due to the foreground process and all background waits. One may ignore the following wait events:

- client message
- dispatcher timer
- KXFX: execution message dequeue – Slaves
- KXFX: Reply Message Dequeue – Query Coord
- Null event
- parallel query dequeue wait
- parallel query idle wait - Slaves
- pipe get
- PL/SQL lock timer
- pmon timer
- rdbms ipc message
- slave wait
- smon timer
- SQL*Net message from client
- virtual circuit status
- WMON goes to sleep

Instance Level

```

select sum(time_waited) "Total Wait Time"
from v$system_event

```



```
where event not in ('pmon timer', 'smon timer', 'rdbms ipc
message', 'parallel dequeue wait', 'virtual circuit', 'SQL*Net
message from client', 'client message', 'NULL event');
```

Note: not a complete list in this sample query

Session Level

```
select sid, sum(time_waited) "Total Time waited"
from v$session_event
where event != 'SQL*Net message from client'
group by sid;
```

utlbstat/utlestat

The above information is also available from the `report.txt` file generated by the `utlbstat/utlestat` scripts. Collect all relevant wait times (excluding the ones listed above) from the sections on background and non-background wait events.

Tuning to change overall response time

Once all this data has been acquired, we can rationally decide where to focus our tuning efforts, by basing our focus on the area that is taking the highest percentage of time. The above steps simply present a method for looking initially at the entire system and then logically determining which area contributes most to the total response time. The next step involves breaking down this target area and taking appropriate action.

Keep in mind, that once all this data has been gathered the problem may not be at the database level. Any tuning activity needs to take the entire system into account, and we need to apply the same principle we use when decomposing response time on the server to the overall system. To illustrate this, consider a query where the response time is 10 seconds. Your investigation decomposes that into Service time and Wait time, but a quick look at the numbers shows that the total amount of time spent in the database is only 2 seconds. Therefore, the database server is accounting for only 20% of the overall response time and may not be the best area to focus your tuning efforts.

IV. Breaking Down CPU Time

If CPU contributes most to total response time, it will need to be further decomposed into detailed segments to properly understand the problem.

CPU time basically falls into three categories:

parse time CPU

This reports the amount of CPU used for parsing SQL statements. Generally, parse time CPU should not exceed 10 to 20% of the total CPU, although many times this is around 70%. Parse time CPU can be a strong indication that an application has not been well tuned (or an older version of Forms such as v4.0 or below is still being used). High parse time CPU usually indicates that the application may be spending too much time opening and closing cursors or is not using bind variables. Check the following statistics from `V$SYSSTAT` or `V$SESSTAT`:

- **parse count**
This is the total number of hard and soft parses. A hard parse occurs when a SQL statement has to be loaded into the shared pool. In this case, Oracle has to allocate memory in the shared pool and parse the statement. A soft parse is recorded when Oracle checks the shared pool for a SQL statement and finds a version of the statement that it can reuse.

In Oracle7, one cannot distinguish between hard and soft parses. In Oracle8, parse count is divided into two statistics: parse count (total) and parse count (hard). By subtracting the parse count (hard) from parse count (total) one can calculate the soft parse count.

- **execute count**
This represents the total number of executions of Data Manipulation Language (DML) and Data Definition Language (DDL) statements.
- **session cursor cache count**
The total size of the session cursor cache for the session (in V\$SESSTAT) or the total size for all sessions (in V\$SYSSTAT).
- **session cursor cache hits**
The number of times a statement did not have to be reopened and reparsed, because it was still in the cursor cache for the session.

From these statistics, the percentage of parses vs. executes can be calculated (*parse count/execute count*). If this ratio is higher than 20%, consider the following:

- ensure the application is using bind variables. By using bind variables, it is unnecessary to reparse SQL statements with new values before re-executing. It is significantly better to use bind variables and parse the SQL statement once in the program. This will also reduce the number of network packets and round trips [This reason becomes less relevant with Oracle8 OCI.] It will also reduce resource contention within the shared pool.
- if using Forms, make sure that Forms version 4.5 (or higher) is used
- if applications open/re-parse the same SQL statements and the value of 'session cursor cache hits' is low compared to the number of parses, it may be useful to increase the number of cursor cache for the session. If no hit ratio improvement results, lower this number to conserve memory and reduce cache maintenance overhead.
- check pre-compiler programs on the number of open cursors that they can support (default = 10 in some cases). Also check if programs are pre-compiled with `release_cursors = NO` and `hold_cursors = YES`

recursive cpu usage

This includes the amount of CPU used for executing row cache statements (data dictionary lookup) and PL/SQL programs, etc. If recursive cpu usage is high, relative to the total CPU, check for the following:

- determine if much PL/SQL code (triggers, functions, procedures, packages) is executed. Stored PL/SQL code always runs under a recursive session, so it is reflected in recursive CPU time. Consider optimizing any SQL coded within those program units. This activity can be determined by querying V\$SQL.
- examine the size of the shared pool and its usage. Possibly, increase the SHARED_POOL_SIZE. This can be determined by monitoring V\$SQL and V\$SGASTAT.
- set ROW_CACHE_CURSORS. This is similar to session cached cursors and should be set to a value around 100. Since there are only some 85 distinct data dictionary SQL statements executed by the server processes, higher values will have no effect.

Other CPU

This composes of CPU time that will be used for tasks such as looking up buffers, fetching rows or index keys, etc. Generally "other" CPU should represent the highest percentage of CPU time out of the total CPU time used. Also look in vsqlarea^2/v$sql1$

² It is better to query from V\$SQL since V\$SQLAREA is a GROUP BY of statements in the shared pool while V\$SQL does not GROUP the statements. Some of the V\$ views have to take out relevant latches to obtain the data to reply to queries. This is notably so for views

to find SQL statements that have a high number of buffer_gets per execution and/or a high number of physical reads per execution. Investigation of these gets (especially the first) will help to reduce the remaining or "other" CPU time.

With the following SQL statement, find the overall CPU usage:

```
select a.value "Total CPU",
       b.value "Parse CPU",
       c.value "Recursive CPU",
       a.value - b.value - c.value "Other"
from v$sysstat a, v$sysstat b, v$sysstat c
where a.name = 'CPU used by this session'
      and b.name = 'parse CPU time'
      and c.name = 'recursive CPU';
```

Note: the descriptors in v\$sysstat may change between versions!

The following SQL statement will show the CPU usage per session:

```
select distinct a.sid, a.value "Total CPU",
               b.value "Parse CPU",
               c.value "Recursive CPU",
               a.value - b.value - c.value "Other CPU"
from v$sesstat a, v$sesstat b, v$sesstat c
where a.statistic# = 12
      and b.statistic# = 150
      and c.statistic# = 8
```

Note: the descriptors in v\$sysstat may change between versions!

Remember that fixing the CPU time may/will help to improve the throughput (depending on the application profile).

V. Breaking Down Wait Time

If wait time is the largest contributor to total response time, decompose it into detailed segments to further understand the problem.

To correctly identify the events contributing the highest amounts of wait time, query the view **V\$SYSTEM_EVENT** and order the events by time_waited:

```
select *
from v$system_event
where event not in ('pmon timer', 'smon timer', 'rdbms ipc
message', 'parallel dequeue wait', 'virtual circuit', 'SQL*Net
message from client', 'client message', 'NULL event') order by
time_waited;
```

Note: not a complete list of events to ignore (see time waited section above)

The output from **V\$SYSTEM_EVENT** can be ordered to show the events that are the greatest contributors to the amount of time waited. **Utlbstat/utlestat** will also generate a **report.txt** file with similar output. Refer to the Oracle8 Reference Guide, Appendix A for more information on when and how a particular event is used. From the event descriptions, appropriate actions can then be taken to correct any performance problems identified. However for the purpose of this paper, the following list represents the primary events that usually contribute the greatest amount of wait time.

against the library cache and SQL area. It is generally advisable to be selective about what SQL is issued against these views. In particular use of **V\$SQLAREA** can place a great load on the library cache latches.

buffer busy waits

This event is caused by:

- multiple sessions requesting the same block (i.e., one or more sessions are waiting for a process to read the requested block into the buffer cache)
- multiple sessions waiting for a change to complete for the same block (only one process at a time can write to the block, so other processes have to wait for that buffer to become available)

If buffer busy waits is high, determine which blocks are being accessed concurrently and if the blocks are being read or changed through `V$SESSION_WAIT` and `V$WAITSTAT`.

`V$SESSION_WAIT` will show the **file#**, **block#** and **id** (where id represents the status of the buffer busy wait event).

- file# - data file number containing the block being read
- block# - block number being waited on
- id - buffer busy wait event:
 - 1013/1014 - block is being read by another session
 - 1012/1016 - block is being modified

`V$WAITSTAT` will show the block classes and the number of times waited for each. Different actions may be taken for each block class to alleviate contention. Tuning priorities should be oriented toward the classes that contribute the highest wait time percentage.

segment header waits

Each segment has one segment header block. There are basically two types of segments -- data and index. The following is a brief discussion on causes for segment header blocks based on the data structures they contain:

- **Problem:** A high insert rate on a table with insufficient transaction free lists results in a bottleneck.
- **Solution:** Increase free list groups. For databases running in exclusive mode, this recommendation may also circumvent the issue of a small block size constraining the number of available free lists.
- **Problem:** Under heavy insert activity, a table's High Water Mark (HWM) is constantly updated. This may be due to running out of blocks on the free lists and need to replenish it by allocating new blocks. The default value for incrementing the HWM is 5, which may be insufficient on a busy system or for the average insert size.
- **Solution:** This value can be increased up to 255 through the undocumented init.ora parameter, `_BUMP_HIGHWATER_MARK_COUNT`. Caution: this parameter determines how many blocks to allocate per free list when bumping up the HWM. Therefore, this can grow a table very quickly if it has a high number of free lists. For example, if there are 100 free lists and `_bump_highwater_mark_count=100`, then this may quickly add up to 10000 free blocks to the segment.
- **Problem:** Constantly inserting new entries into the extent map within the segment header because extent sizes are too small.
- **Solution:** Increase the size of each extent. Although ORACLE7 release 7.3 allows an object to have unlimited extents, it is better to have a small number of very large extents than to have a large number of small extents.

Data block waits

The data block class is used to store data (index or table data). Here are some reasons for data block waits:

- **Problem:** multiple sessions could be requesting the same block from disk (this could actually happen for each block class). Only one session will do the read from disk, and the other sessions will be waiting for the block to be placed into the buffer cache. The other sessions will be waiting on the buffer busy wait event (1014).
- **Solution:** the buffer cache may be too small to keep the current working set in memory. Enlarging the buffer cache (`db_block_buffers`) can help. Another option is to use buffer pools to reduce the number of buffers an object can occupy in the buffer cache. For example, we may effectively limit the number of buffers that a randomly accessed large table can occupy in the buffer cache by placing it in the recycle pool.
- **Problem:** multiple sessions are going after rows in the same block because it contains so many rows.
- **Solution:** reduce the number of rows per block (i.e., modify `pctfree/pctused` settings). This is a space for time tradeoff. The table will use more space, but 'buffer busy waits' will be reduced.
- **Problem:** multiple sessions are trying to insert into the same block because there is only one free list (or insufficient free lists).
- **Solution:** adding multiple free lists to the object will increase the number of heads of free lists, thus the contention point can be distributed over the free lists, reducing the number of buffer busy waits.

Free list block waits

This statistic measures contention for "free list group" blocks. Some documentation and tuning scripts claim that waits on this block class indicate that the number of free lists need to be increased for some objects. Most databases that run in exclusive mode see zero waits on this block class because their DBAs do not create objects with free list groups. Otherwise, the reasons and solutions for free list block waits are similar to those of segment header waits. See that section for details.

Identifying block waits by file

`X$KCBFWAIT` shows a count of buffer busy waits per file. The `indx` column represents the file id number - 1. So this view can be queried to determine which file has a high number of buffer busy waits.

```
select indx+1 fileno, count, time
   from x$kcbfwait
  where time != 0 or count > 0
 order by time;
```

If the file with highest wait time is known, find the objects that belong to that file:

```
select file_id, segment_name, segment_type, freelists,
       freelist_groups, pctfree, pctused
   from dba_extents
  where file_id = <fileno>;
```

db file scattered read

This wait event usually indicates some type of multi-block I/O operation (full table scans or fast full index scans in Oracle 7.3 and higher). The number of data blocks read per I/O operation is determined by the `init.ora` parameter `db_file_multiblock_read_count` (which can be changed dynamically in Oracle 7.3).

Check with `v$filestat` to see which files have done scans:

```
select file#, phyrds, phyblkrd, readtim
   from v$filestat
  where phyrds != phyblkrd;
```

If phydrds is close to phyblkrd then single block reads are occurring. If that is not the case, full scans or range scans are happening on that file.

To reduce the cost of a db file scattered read, check the file placement on each disk, the number of disks, and the stripe size per disk (this should be $2 * db_file_multiblock_read_count$).

To reduce the amount of a db file scattered read, check for missing indexes on the object where the scan is happening or check the SQL statement that is executing the scan.

db file sequential read

This event occurs for single block reads (like index lookup). The normal way to reduce this event is to examine the amount and cost of the I/Os that are preformed. One can normally reduce the amount of I/Os and make each I/O faster.

- **Reducing the amount of I/Os**

To achieve this, a number of things can be done:

- **increase db_block_buffers**

It is likely that the buffer cache is too small. In today's market, memory is getting cheaper and systems with a large amount of memory are becoming more common. Even Very Large Memory (VLM) systems are available. Increasing the number of buffers will have a positive effect on the buffer cache hit ratio. It is important to realize that even a small increase in the buffer cache hit ratio can have a dramatic effect if the buffer cache is large.

- **reduce physical reads per execute for SQL statements**

In the introduction, it was stated that tuning SQL could have a big impact on the overall performance of the system. One of the biggest wait components of the SQL statement execution is the I/O. Finding the SQL statement with the most reads per execution is a good start:

```
select disk_reads, executions, disk_reads/executions,
sql_text
from v$sql
where executions != 0
order by 3;
```

Once the SQL statement with the highest reads per execution has been identified, it is good to have a quick look at the number of executions (or the total number of reads that the SQL statement has done). It is more important to check that the SQL statement being tuned is significant to the application instead of being one that is executed only once (at night for example in a batch job). It is also worthwhile to use the same query to identify the SQL statements that are executed most:

```
select disk_reads, executions, disk_reads/executions,
sql_text
from v$sql
where executions != 0
order by 2;
```

Incremental improvements on a query executed many times can provide significant performance gains. In either case, tuning SQL statements is a skill in itself. This paper will only help in identifying the SQL statement that needs to be fixed not how it should be fixed.

- **Using the 'CACHE' option**

A table can be created with or modified to use the CACHE option. Buffers retrieved for this object through a Full Table Scan (FTS) will be placed on the

Most Recently Used end of the buffer cache LRU list (replacing the normal behavior of placing those buffers at the Least Recently Used (LRU) end of the LRU list)

Choose the tables to cache wisely. Sometimes caching the smallest table may be best the thing to do. The problem is that random access to a large table using the CACHE option may force out blocks from a smaller table that are less frequently accessed. Another example is the sequential write to a history type of table. All the writes to that table may end up in the cache, forcing out older blocks from other objects.

- **buffer pools (Oracle8).**

In Oracle8, we can assign objects to buffer pools, and each buffer pool can have a different replacement policy, a certain number of buffers, and a number of LRU latches. The recycle replacement policy may reduce the number of buffers that an object can occupy. For example, a randomly accessed large table can slowly take over the buffer cache, by squeezing out the less frequently used blocks of other objects. A solution would be to assign the large object to a small recycle buffer pool. This leaves the rest of the buffer cache for the other objects and improves the buffer cache hit ratio.

- **Reducing the cost of I/Os**

The following can be done:

- **use faster disks/controllers**

Faster disks can make a big difference. See the example earlier in this paper. Do not be fooled by disks with large caches, since it can appear that all operations are coming from the cache. However, with a large OLTP application, writes to disk must eventually occur. If the physical writes are slow, they could delay the write into the disk cache (possibly from a need to find room or write out a dirty block). Also, having one 9GB drive (running at 5400 RPM) is not necessarily better than two 4GB drives (running at 4500 RPM). The total number of reads and writes that can be done is the most important factor to consider. If each disk can complete a read or write in around 100 I/Os per second, 2 slower RPM drives would be a more optimal solution by doubling the I/Os per second.

- **check the wait time for each disk**

Find the disks with the highest wait time and check to see what objects reside on that disk. It may be necessary to physically redistribute the data.

- **find the number of I/O per filesystem/logical volume, disk, controller**

Uneven distribution of I/O among filesystems, disks and controllers can be identified by mapping the I/O statistics gathered from `sar` and `V$FILESTAT` to controllers, disks, logical volumes and filesystems.

- **use better stripe sizes or stripe widths**
- **find the average read time per file**
- **use more disks to stripe a file over**
- **find disks with the highest read time**

In order to determine which file may be causing a problem for I/O use `V$FILESTAT`. Examine the ratio of **readtim** (amount of time spent reading) and **phyrds** (total number of reads) per file:

```
select file#, readtim, phyrds, readtim/phyrds from v$filestat
order by 4;
```

Look at the file with the highest read percentage out of the total reads and the highest read times. If the average cost per I/O is high this may indicate a need to increase the stripe width or the total number of disks involved in striping. Also look at the total number of I/Os per transaction, then how many concurrent transactions are running, for example:

If each transaction requires 2 reads + 1 write and the expectation is to perform 1000 transactions per second, this calculation requires that the system actually process 3000 I/Os per second. Therefore, if one disk can perform 50-100 I/Os per second, at least 60 disks will be needed (3000 divided by 50). Now if the requirement doubles from 1000 transactions per second to 2000, it will be necessary to double the number of disks. This, however, is often forgotten in the real world.

Remember that it is important to get a sense of the scale needed to meet the requirement. Also, plan for stress capacity. With 100 users, the I/O might be just fine, but if the number of users is doubled, then the current disks and striping may no longer be sufficient. To increase throughput, disks will need to be added!

free buffer waits

Free buffer waits may be caused by the session scanning a buffer cache LRU list for a free buffer. If the dirty list is full, then a foreground process must wait for dirty buffers to be written to disk. Or when a session scans too many buffers (`_db_block_max_scan_count` in Oracle7), it is more likely that the dirty list is full, so increasing `_db_block_write_batch` should be sufficient.

Check for the following statistics in `v$sysstat` and `v$sesstat`:

- **free buffers inspected**
The number of dirty and pinned buffers skipped before a free buffer is found.
- **free buffers requested**
The number of buffers requested to store data by all sessions.
- **dirty buffers inspected**
The number of dirty buffers (buffers that need to be flushed to disk before they can be reused by sessions).

The following formula will calculate the average number of buffers that a session is scanning at the end of an LRU to find a free buffer:

$$1 + (\text{free buffers inspected} / \text{free buffers requested})$$

If this number is close to 1, it means a process can find a buffer on average very quickly. If the number is very large, it normally means that a lot of Consistent Read (CR) buffers are sitting at the end of the LRU (sometimes buffers are put at the end of the LRU so that the hot buffers will stay at the top of the LRU).

Other interesting buffer cache statistics are:

- **DBWR free buffers found**
When the DBWR was scanning for buffers to write, it found this number of free buffers (buffers that did not need to be flushed).
- **DBWR dirty buffers found**
When the DBWR was scanning for buffers to write, it found this number of dirty buffers (buffers that did need to be flushed).
- **Physical writes**
The number of dirty blocks flushed to disk by the DBWR.
- **Write requests**
The number of batches of dirty buffers flushed to disk.

latch free

With a high number of latch free waits, it is important to determine which latch is being requested most. When the bottleneck is a single latch (single threaded), increasing the spin count can help in multiple CPU (SMP) machines. In this case, it is 'cheaper' to spin the CPU than to pay the cost to have a process sleep. However, if a system is already CPU-bound, increasing `spin_count` may worsen the situation.

Two of the most highly contended latches are the shared pool latch and the library cache latch. Each of these latches can be held for a long time so if there is contention, a low value for the `spin_count` variable can cause processes to sleep unnecessarily. There can also be a great deal of contention for the redo allocation latch. The redo allocation latch is used for allocating space in the log buffer when foregrounds need to write redo records

All of these latches are potential points of contention. In case of the library cache latches and shared pool latch, the number of latch gets occurring is influenced directly by the amount of activity in the shared pool, especially parse operations. Anything that can minimize the number of latch gets and indeed the amount of activity in the shared pool is helpful to both performance and scalability.

The event latch free is equal to the SUM of sleeps in `v$latch`.

- **First use `v$latch` to determine the latch with the highest sleep count:**

```
select name, sleeps
from v$latch
order by sleeps;
```

- **Since `v$latch` only shows the parent latch, check `v$latch_children` to determine which child latch (if any) has the most contention:**

```
select name, sleeps
from v$latch_children
where name = <latch name>
and sleeps > <minimum base>
order by sleeps;
```

- **Depending on the latch type many different changes can be made:**

- **Shared pool latch & Library cache latch**

Every time an application makes a parse call for a SQL statement, and the parsed representation of the statement is not in the shared SQL area, Oracle parses and allocates space in the library cache. The shared pool and library cache latches protect these operations. Once the SQL area becomes fragmented and available memory is reduced, the single-threaded shared pool latch may become a bottleneck. Contention for these latches can be achieved by increasing sharing of SQL, and reducing parsing by keeping cursors open between executions.

- **cache buffer hash chain latch**

Each hash chain latch protects a hash chain comprised of a number of buffer headers, which in turn point to the buffer itself. This latch is acquired every time when a buffer is queried or updated. The number of latches defaults to `prime(0.25 * db_block_buffers)`. There could be a large number of latches, so it is important to add the clause "where sleeps > some number <n>" to filter out most of the latches. Find the latch with the highest sleep. Then find the buffers that are protected by that latch:

```
select hladdr, dbafil, dbablk
from x$bh b, v$latch_children l, (select max(sleeps)
maxsleeps from v$latch_children where type = 11)
where type = 11 -- check v$latchnames for cache buffer -
-- hash chain latches
and l.addr = hladdr
and sleeps >= <maxsleeps>;
```

Note: please use the column `FILE#` instead of `DBAFIL` in Oracle8.

When the `dbafil` and `dbablk` values are found, check `dba_extents` to see what the object name and type is:

```

select segment_name, segment_type
from dba_extents
where file = <file>
and <block> between block_id and block_id + blocks - 1;

```

log file sync

Log file sync happens at commit time when a foreground is waiting for LGWR. Generally the time should be less than 0.2 - 0.5 seconds per wait³.

This event is measured at the session level. The session is waiting for the log writer (LGWR) to flush redo to disk. Inside the log writer, a number of other potential waits will happen:

- log file parallel write (event)
- redo writer latching time (statistic)

Find the average redo write size:

*(Redo blocks written/redo writes) * 512⁴ bytes (usually) = avg. redo write size*

If there is significant redo generation but the average write size is small, check for write back caches at the disk level or disk array level. Caching the redo writes may be dangerous (and may lead to possible data corruption), but it could also negatively affect the performance of the whole system. If the LGWR process is too active, it could cause too much redo latch contention. Another reason for a "small average redo write size" could be that LGWR is unable to piggyback many commits. The whole system may not be very busy resulting in LGWR waking up immediately (when posted) and writing the redo for a session. This means that the next session may have to wait for this write to complete before its redo will be written. The maximum I/O size for the redo writer is also port specific. The normal values can range from 64K to 128K.

Striping the log file may help in this case. A recommended stripe size (or stripe width) is 16K. Also sizing the redo log buffer correctly is important. To calculate an approximate size use:

*(3 * ((redo size / (user commits + user rollbacks)) * transaction commits per second)) / 2⁵*

enqueue

When this event shows up in `v$sqlsystem_event`, also check `x$ksqst` to see what enqueue type is causing the waits:

```

select *
from x$ksqst6

```

³ Before 8.0.4, there was a problem where LGWR was not always posting the correct foreground processes. As a result, some foreground processes were timing out and therefore accrued a response time of at least one second (as the timeout value for this event is 1 second). If this is found, contact Oracle Support for the proper patch.

⁴ The redo block size depends on the physical block size for the port. For most ports this is 512 bytes, but for some ports this is actually a larger value (2K or 4K). `dbfsize <redo log file>` will tell what the block size is.

⁵ Multiply by 1.5 since LGWR will start to write the redo buffer when it becomes 2/3 full or when a foreground or DBWR will post LGWR.

⁶ `x$ksqst` is an internal view. It can change without any notice or may even be dropped in a future release. So do not depend on it.

```
where ksqstget != 0
order by ksqstget;
```

This will show gets and waits for all enqueue types. Also `v$sysstat/v$sesstat` shows some interesting information:

- **enqueue gets**
The number of enqueue “get” operations that are performed. For example getting the ST lock will count as an enqueue get.
- **enqueue converts**
The number of enqueue convert operations that are performed. For example, converting an enqueue from S (shared) mode to X (exclusive) mode.
- **enqueue releases**
Most enqueues that are obtained are then released. This means the number of conversions will be minimal or non-existent on most systems.
- **enqueue waits**
The number of times that a session tried to get an enqueue but could not right away (this is true for enqueue gets and enqueue conversions). Some tuning sources state that if the enqueue waits are high, then `enqueue_resources` need to be increased. This is incorrect. Waits just indicate that an enqueue could not be granted. If `enqueue_resources` are depleted, an appropriate message indicating the need to increase resources is returned immediately.
- **enqueue deadlocks**
Indicates the number of deadlocks detected for the session or the number of ORA-60 errors returned to the session.
- **enqueue timeouts**
If an enqueue could not be granted, it means that the session will have to wait (enqueue waits), and within the wait, there can be several timeouts.

Look in `v$lock` or `v$session_wait` to see what the enqueue sessions are currently waiting on:

```
select * from v$session_wait where event = 'enqueue';
```

Examples of most common enqueue types that will show in the above queries

CF - Control File Enqueue
SQ - Sequence Enqueue
ST - Space Management Transaction
TM - DML enqueue
TS - Table Space enqueue
TX - Transaction enqueue
mode 6 = row level lock
mode 4 = not enough ITL entries in object (that could be index or table)

(Join `v$session_wait` with `v$session` with `v$sql` to find the current SQL statement and object for this session).

write complete waits

When a buffer is being written, it cannot change until the buffer is flushed to disk. The most common reason for this to happen is frequent checkpointing. Normally a hot buffer will stay at the Most Recently Used end of the LRU and the chance that it will be written is small. Checkpointing occurs normally due to:

- small redo log files
- default setting of `log_checkpoint_interval`

SQL*Net more data from client

When the application design is not judged a culprit, sometimes the network can be responsible for most of the wait time (or latency). Network latency is defined by the time it takes to gain access to a particular network device accompanied by the time it takes to transmit the data to the next device in the network. This latency can vary greatly based on the technology used (10 Megabit Ethernet vs. 100 Megabit Ethernet), the opportunity to transmit on the network (bandwidth utilization), and distance traveled. Once the network has been created however, the latency for each network packet that is being sent can vary. So optimizing the performance of an application on a network can be done in two ways:

Reducing the number of network packets:

- bundle packages -> bundled and/or deferred Oracle calls
- use array operations
- use a different session layer protocol (HTTP instead of SQL*Net as in Web Server based applications)

Reducing the latency (reducing the cost per packet):

- use Gigabit Ethernet in the backbone or Data Center
- use ATM or SONAT for the Wide Area Network

SQL*Net more data to client

See discussion for SQL*Net more data from client.

VI. Parallel Server Events and Tuning

Following through with this type of tuning methodology becomes especially critical to Oracle Parallel Server (OPS) environments. Similar to the examples previously given, the measurement of Response Time still holds true:

$$\text{Response Time} = \text{Service Time} + \text{Wait Time}$$

However, the solutions implemented to maintain consistency within an OPS environment, such as Parallel Cache Management (PCM), also introduces a cost to maintaining this consistency. Since OPS requires additional mechanisms (such as the Distributed Lock Manager (DLM) to help manage locks globally in disjoint environments), the cost of synchronization now increases for any lock request which may be handled by the DLM. Although the above events found in single instance environments may still be the primary areas causing contention, and will thus require tuning, it is also very likely that OPS specific events may be causing most of the contention. In addition, the dynamic views from which the Oracle statistics are collected contain information specific to that local instance only. Therefore, events and statistics must be queried from all instances to allow proper performance diagnosis. (Note: In Oracle8, global views are provided to present information across all instances in an OPS environment.)

Remember that there are additional locking mechanisms implemented for OPS environments. Latches, which are local to each instance, continue to exist to protect memory structures in the SGA, however, Instance Locks (or Global Locks) are implemented in OPS to maintain consistency between the different instances accessing the same data. These instance locks can be distributed between two different categories: PCM Locks and non-PCM locks.

The PCM locks protect data entering and leaving the buffer cache, such as data blocks, index blocks, rollback segment blocks, etc. However, non-PCM, or Distributed File System (DFS), locks consist of enqueues which exist in single instance environments (e.g., TM (table) lock,

TX (transaction) lock, etc.) and locks which are unique to OPS (e.g., SC (system commit number) lock). In Oracle7, the non-PCM locks, which exist as local enqueues for single instance environments but become global for OPS, are identified by events that begin with "DFS enqueue." Non-PCM locks that are unique to parallel server environments are identified by events that begin with "DFS lock"

PCM Lock Events

lock element clean up - indicates a process is waiting on getting a lock element (trying to get a block). This usually indicates pinging (remote requests from another instance for a block).

Problems related to block pings can use the following method to determine which objects and blocks are causing the highest percentage of pinging, as well as the type (false, soft, or hard) and number of pings.

Identify which blocks, along with the corresponding block classes, are being pinged and which object they are associated with. Depending on the block class and object take the appropriate action such as adjusting the corresponding GC_ parameter, adding free list groups, etc.

Note: In Oracle7, V\$FILE_PING and V\$PING do not correctly report all the ping statistics! These views only count conversions down to N (Null) where it should actually count all down conversions from X (Exclusive), such as X->S, X->SSX and X->N. Since an X lock is held for writes, any down conversions from exclusive mode will force dirty blocks in the cache covered by the lock, to be written to disk.

See the following chart for the areas where V\$PING misses counts:

<u>Type of Convert</u>	<u>Could this cause a write?</u>	<u>Counted by V\$PING?</u>
X -> N	Yes	Yes
X -> SSX	Yes	No
X -> S	Yes	No
S -> N	No	Yes

The ping count for these views are fixed in Oracle8, but be aware that these statistics in Oracle7 may not be accurate! For Oracle7, V\$LOCK_ACTIVITY is one of the views that can indicate how much pinging is taking place within an instance. Through this view, it is possible to explicitly count the various PCM Lock converts that are taking place.

Checking frequency of PCM Lock Conversion

X to NULL = instance gave up block at request of another instance

X to S = instance shared block with another instance

X to SSX = instance shared block with another instance

NULL to S = instance requested a block from another instance

S to X = instance requested a block from another instance

```

select (value/(a.counter + b.counter + c.counter) - 1)/
       (value/(a.counter + b.counter + c.counter)) Rate
from v$sysstat,
     v$lock_activity a,
     v$lock_activity b,
     v$lock_activity c
where a.from_val = 'X'
     and a.to_val = 'NULL'
     and b.from_val = 'X'
     and b.to_val = 'S'
     and c.from_val = 'X'
     and c.to_val = 'SSX';

```

It is also feasible to use the event **DBWR cross instance writes** from `V$SYSSTAT` to determine the number of writes taking place due to 'pings'. In order to obtain a percentage of writes done for remote requests compared to total writes done for an instance:

% of writes due to pings = DBWR cross instance writes/physical writes

```
select y.value "All Writes",
       z.value "Ping Writes",
       z.value/y.value "Pings Rate"
from v$sysstat y,
     v$sysstat z
where z.name = 'DBWR cross instance writes'
and y.name = 'physical writes';
```

Note: Ping Rate value measures FALSE pinging activity (> 1 indicates false pings, < 1 indicates soft pings)

To identify blocks that have a high ping rate and their corresponding class, query the view `V$BH`. If PCM lock adjustments are needed, then modify the appropriate Global Cache (GC_) parameter that corresponds to the particular block class.

<u>Block Class</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>GC Parameter</u>
1	Data Blocks Contains data from indexes or tables	GC_DB_LOCKS, GC_FILES_TO_LOCKS
2	Sort Blocks - Contains data from on disk sorts and temporary table locks.	[no PCM locks needed]
3	Save Undo Blocks	GC_SAVE_ROLLBACK_LOCKS
4	Segment Header Blocks	GC_SEGMENTS
5	Save Undo Header Blocks	GC_TABLESPACES
6	Free List Group Blocks	GC_FREELIST_GROUPS
7	System undo Header Block System Undo Blocks	GC_ROLLBACK_SEGMENTS GC_ROLLBACK_LOCKS

Total number of pings (XNC - X to Null count) for each block where XNC !=0

Note: Once a block completely exits the cache (i.e., there are no versions of the block left in the buffer cache), the XNC count gets reset to 0. Therefore it will be important to monitor this view during regular intervals to obtain a better indication of blocks which are pinged excessively.

Pings per file / block

```
select file#, block#, class#, status .xnc count
from v$bh a
where b.xnc!=0 and status in ('XCUR', 'SCUR')
order by xnc, file#, block#;
```

Once the file and blocks causing the highest amount of contention are identified, determine the corresponding object and how that object is currently being accessed by querying `V$SQL`.

To determine the corresponding object name and type:

```
select segment_name, segment_type
from dba_extents
where file_id=<file#>
and <block#> between block_id and block_id + blocks - 1;
```

To determine the type of SQL statements being executed:

```

select sql_text, executions,
       decode(command_type, 2, 'INSERT', 3, 'SELECT', 6, 'UPDATE', 7,
              'DELETE', 'OTHER' )
  from v$sql ;

```

Note: For additional information on command types, please reference the Oracle Server Reference Manual.

lock element waits - indicates a process is waiting on a lock element convert (for example, another process within the same instance is currently getting the lock)

This can be caused by either not having enough locks (possibly false pinging) or processes requesting the same set of blocks.

Note: For OPS there is a hint in the optimizer when getting locks for unique indexes, so that if 1 row is being changed, the lock is gotten directly in XCUR mode. However, if it is getting two rows or more it is first gotten in SCUR then upgraded to XCUR.

Non PCM Lock Events

DFS enqueue lock acquisition

DFS lock release

DFS lock convert

DFS lock acquisition

These events indicate that a process is waiting on acquiring or converting a global lock. Depending on the lock type and the corresponding identifiers different actions can be taken to tune this piece appropriately. In order to determine the enqueues that have a high number of waits, query the view `x$ksqst` (also described in section IV below).

```

select * from x$ksqst where ksqstget != 0;

```

Depending on the enqueue type that shows a high number of waits, appropriate action can then be taken. This will show the type, the number of gets, and the number of waits. For example high TS and ST waits may indicate a need to check and/or increase extent sizes. TM waits and gets represents table locks. For this issue, consider disabling table locks. ST waits indicates space management tasks such as coalescing free space, cleaning up temporary segments, or allocating and de-allocating extents.

VII. Additional Discussions and Examples

1) Logging on and off

The log on and log off operations are costly since a login must get a unique session id from the `AUDSESS$` sequence number every time. In the example of sessions continuously logging on and off, the recursive CPU and wait time for access to the block containing `AUDSESS$` would be high. Since the cache size for `AUDSESS$` is only 20, increasing this value can help the performance of login operations. For OPS environments, the cost is even greater if there are multiple processes concurrently logging onto the different instances. If multiple OPS instances are requesting a single block containing `AUDSESS$`, this will cause additional lock and pinging overhead.

2) Networks

Inband-breaks:

Inband breaks are used over TCP and IPC protocols, which check for a pending Control-C on an existing connection. This can severely affect the performance of long running queries when issued over TCP/IP, if this polling is done excessively. This is specifically for platforms like AIX or NT, which use in-band breaks in Oracle7 (NT always uses inband breaks), when out-of-band breaks (OOB) can't be negotiated. Where possible, Oracle generally uses out-of-band breaks. The undocumented `sqlnet.ora` parameter `BREAK_POLL_SKIP` needs to be set to a very high value (like 1000000000) to reduce the number of breaks. However, increasing the parameter will in turn lead to "hanging" queries when a Control-C is issued to interrupt the processing.

SQL*Net packet size:

Is it possible that SQL*Net's number of small packets is causing network performance problem? The answer is in RFC 896. To avoid congestion on a network by many small packets, a solution was proposed called the 'Nagle algorithm'. This algorithm tells TCP to wait to send data (until a time out period) if the total amount of data to be sent is less than its buffers can hold. For real-time applications that depend on data being sent as quickly as possible, the Nagle algorithm should be disabled. Unfortunately, some versions of SQL*Net TCP/IP are subject to this algorithm. There is a fix in 7.2.3 (bug 475453) and generic solution in 7.3.3 upward (bug 449089).

Consider the network Maximum Transmission Unit (MTU) when setting the Session Data Unit (SDU). Most of the time setting the SDU will not be necessary as RFC 1191 (Path MTU Discovery) is commonly used in most TCP's. If it is not, then fragmentation and reassembling of packets have a chance to occur at the IP level. This is caused by the MTU sizes differing for each network traversed so the packets must be broken into the smallest size and transmitted over the small MTU network, being reassembled at the receiving end.

For the most part, the best way to solve network problems is to create an application that uses less packets, or use an application technology that is designed to use less packets (like Web based applications that use HTTP).

Some hints on improving performance:

```
tcp.nodelay = true
```

in the `sqlnet.ora` file on the client and the server side (for 2.2 and 2.3 of SQL*Net). This will force TCP to send the packet (set the push bit) and not wait.

In SQL*Net v2.3, change the Session Data Unit (SDU) to multiples of the MTU. It is also necessary to make this change on the server side (as the SDU is negotiated during the initial database connect and the smallest is then used). If the

SDU is set in multiples of the underlying network packet size, then you may also achieve some additional performance gain.

How to specify the SDU and TDU:

Packet Sizes:

SQL*Net allows limited control over the packet sizes via the two parameters Session Data Unit (SDU) and Transmission Data Unit (TDU). These control the sizes of the 'Session' and 'Transport' layer buffers respectively.

Prior to 7.3, SDU and TDU are limited to 2k.

In 7.3 onwards these are tunable above 2k.

SDU size is tunable (up to 32K) from Oracle7 release 7.3 onwards.

For example, if configuring for a pure Ethernet network, it is possible to set the above buffers to 8 times the size that can be transmitted inside an Ethernet frame. Do to this, in the in TNSNAMES.ORA the following sizes can be set:

```
alias= (DESCRIPTION=
        (SDU=8192)      <<**** service layer buffer size
        (TDU=8192)      <<**** transport layer size
        (ADDRESS= (PROTOCOL=tcp) (PORT=2010) (HOST=abc))
        (CONNECT_DATA= (SID=db3))
    )
```

It is possible to set TDU different to SDU, but there is no reason to do this. For example, with TDU=1024 and SDU=1536, 512 and then 1024 bytes of data will be sent to the transport. With TDU=2048 and SDU=1536, 1536 bytes of data will be sent to the transport.

SDU / TDU Configuration:

To configure the TDU / SDU sizes to work properly for a particular network, ensure that the TDU/SDU figures appear in all the relevant places. Here are some examples for the 3 main locations:

TNSNAMES.ORA: The parameters must appear in the DESCRIPTION clause.

```
UKHP55_V732.UK.ORACLE.COM =
  (DESCRIPTION =
    (SDU=8192)          <<**** Calls to this alias will
    (TDU=8192)          <<**** try to put 8K into packets.
    (ADDRESS = (COMMUNITY = TCP.uk.oracle.com)
              (PROTOCOL = TCP)
              (HOST = ukhp55.uk.oracle.com)
              (PORT = 1521)
    )
    (CONNECT_DATA = (SID = V7323))
  )
```

LISTENER.ORA: The parameters must appear in the SID_DESC clause.

```
SID_LIST_LISTENER =
  (SID_LIST =
    (SID_DESC =
      (SDU = 8192)      <<**** Connects to this SID will
      (TDU = 8192)      <<**** try to use put 8K into packets.
      (SID_NAME = V7323)
      (ORACLE_HOME = /oracle/product/7.3.2.3)
    )
    (SID_DESC =
      (SID_NAME = V723) <<**** This one will default
      (ORACLE_HOME = /oracle/product/7.2.3) <<**** (generally to 2K)
    )
  )
```

INIT(SID).ORA: For MTS you cannot force TDU/SDU sizes until 7.3.3.

See <Note:44693.1> for a full description of the MTS configuration <Parameter: MTS_DISPATCHERS>.

This is an example for 7.3.3:

```
MTS_DISPATCHERS=" (DESCRIPTION= (SDU=8192) (TDU=8192) \  
  (ADDRESS= (PARTIAL=TRUE) (PROTOCOL=TCP) (HOST=ukhp55))) \  
 (DISPATCHERS=1) "
```

VIII. Conclusion

Oracle customers are faced with rapid changes in their business environment and demand systems that can change as fast. With such rapid change, system modifications inherently incur risk. Oracle customers recognize this and prefer to make as few changes as possible. This resistance needs to be overcome. From a high level, it is important to ask some basic questions to illustrate to them the size of the overall problem:

- What improvements are you looking for?
- When are we done?
- Can we be done?
- Are the expectations realistic?
- Can the customer afford the pain to achieve the goals?

With the method outlined above, one may estimate an achievable performance improvement. However, to tune any application adequately, the appropriate questions must first be asked and then properly measured by viewing an entire system rather than just a part. It is also important to remember that statistics and bottlenecks will change over time. Therefore a continuing effort of monitoring and measuring the overall system performance will be critical in achieving future scalability and improved response times.

IX. Acknowledgements

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