Bitlancer

Strings

Manage servers

Strings integrates with Rackspace and Amazon Web Services to make launching and destroying virtual servers easy. It automatically handles device configuration, including package installations and launching services on each new server.

Manage authentication

Manage access/read/write permissions on both user and team levels for all your virtual servers, right from Strings' web interface. You can even create new user accounts and assign permissions on the fly. Strings can also generate and track all your SSH keys.

Automate configurations

Managing a lot of different configurations? Strings has out-of-the-box support for Apache, PHP, Tomcat, Java, Node.js, MongoDB, Redis, RabbitMQ, Postfix—and we're adding more all the time!

Deploy applications

Strings knows the roles of each of your virtual devices and can pass that information to your deploy framework, to make deployments fast and easy.

Bitlancer Strings is an open source tool with everything you need to quickly and easily deploy, configure and manage your virtual infrastructure from a simple web interface—so you can stop wasting time, money and manpower in the cloud.

Bitlancer Strings is a cloud automation Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) open source tool that makes it infinitely easier to manage your virtual infrastructure. Built for flexibility, Strings is compatible with OpenStack, public, private and hybrid cloud environments.

From the simple Strings web interface, you can easily manage virtual servers, application deployment, user authentication and SSH keys.

Maintain insight and control at the level of abstraction you prefer.
Traditional PaaS offerings abstract almost everything away from the user as a tradeoff for automation. But maybe you want to maintain granular control of your virtual machines and data? Strings lets you keep those processes "in house" while providing the automation you need, and supporting whatever technology stack you've chosen to use.

Using a popular technology stack?
Bitlancer has amassed a set of blueprints that integrate nicely with Strings—so getting into the cloud just got easier.

Need to host your own solution?
We understand the need for compliance, privacy or IP protection, and can easily set you up with your own hosted version of Strings Enterprise.

Using Chef or another configuration management tool?
Even though Strings is built on Puppet, migrating over from Chef is usually pretty easy.

No DevOps bandwidth?
We've seen many situations where the person who built the tooling left the company… and left the team in the lurch. We built Bitlancer Strings to help you get back on track.

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Bitlancer Strings Technical Requirements

Bitlancer Strings was built to be an incredibly flexible hybrid cloud management solution. So there are no "requirements" per se for adopting it. Strings supports public, private, or hybrid cloud environments, and provides you as much or as little granular control as you need over your data and servers. Whether you've got dedicated physical servers or a growing cloud footprint somewhere like AWS or Rackspace, Strings can help you out.

BLUEPRINTS

One of our goals when building Strings was to increase throughput and efficiency for users by identifying repetitive tasks and automating them where possible. To that end, to help get new users started, we have created blueprints—out-of-the-box configurations that enable to you to either create new servers or easily transition existing servers onto the Strings platform. At the time of this writing, blueprints are available for the following standard server configurations:

- Apache
- PHP (mod_php & PHP-FPM)
- Tomcat
- Java
- Node.js
- MySQL
- MongoDB
- Redis
- RabbitMQ
- Postfix
- Drupal
- Ruby on Rails

Bitlancer Strings FAQs

What technology is Strings built on?

Strings is built on a set of popular and stable open-source technologies primarily including Linux, Apache, OpenLDAP, Puppet, and MySQL. Components are written in PHP, Python, and Ruby where respectively appropriate.

If I'm using Chef, can I use Strings?

You can, but we don't recommend it. After lots of experience with both Puppet and Chef (not to mention heated debates about Puppet versus Chef!), we chose to architect on top of Puppet based on its flexibility and robust community.

We've had some folks ask if they can use Strings (and Puppet) in their development/staging environments while using Chef (or Ansible, Salt) in production environments. Technically you can… but why would you want to? Development and staging environments should match production environments as closely as reasonably possible, and that includes configuration management tools.

If I'm using Ansible or Salt, is Strings for me?

If you're heavily invested in Ansible and/or Salt, Strings probably isn't right for you. But if you're struggling to maintain a Chef/Salt/Ansible system, Strings and Puppet might be perfect for you.

If you're still considering which configuration management tool to use, we recommend sticking with one of the mainstream tools: Puppet or Chef. While we're big fans of the Ansible and Salt projects, we find that most of our customer base benefits significantly from the large support communities built around Puppet or Chef.

I'm interested in Puppet Enterprise, Puppet Dashboard, or Foreman. Where does Strings fit in?

While there is significant overlap between Puppet Enterprise, Puppet Dashboard, Foreman, and Strings, they really are different tools with different levels of abstraction. If you're using one or more of these tools and aren't experiencing pain outside of the Puppet world (such as authentication, authorization, key management, or code deployment), then Strings probably isn't for you.

How long does it take to get set up with Strings?

You up and running on Strings in as little as a few hours if you're using some of the many technologies we've already developed blueprints for, including: Apache, Tomcat, PHP, MySQL, MongoDB, Redis, RabbitMQ, Drupal, and Ruby on Rails. Blueprints are basic out-of-the-box configurations we've created for Strings that enable you to easily setup or connect to your existing virtual servers.

How many virtual servers can I manage with Strings?

With the default setup, anywhere from 1 to 1,000! We support load-balanced, hosted Puppet as well, which can help you scale well past 1,000 nodes. If you're looking to manage thousands of Puppetized nodes, you may want to check out Puppet Enterprise instead.

Can I back up my virtual servers?

We have developed a flexible backup solution that integrates with Rackspace Cloudfiles, OpenStack Swift, and Amazon S3, which works for most users. If you have special privacy/compliance needs, you can deploy a custom backup solution using the configuration management tools that are included with Strings.

Does Strings let me manage other devices besides virtual servers?

While Strings was built to manage virtual servers, it also is quite capable of managing Rackspace load balancers.

Is there any kind of server monitoring built into Strings?

Strings does not include a built-in monitoring solution. However, we've made it quite easy to integrate with a number of monitoring services, like Rackspace Monitoring, Stackdriver and Scoutapp.

Can I still use the command line to control my servers?

Yes! You can:

- Utilize SSH to connect to your servers and operate them as you may or may not have done in the past.
- Execute a Strings code deploy from the command line (instead of via the dashboard).

What is the difference between Strings and other as-a-service options?

Strings falls into the platform-as-a-service (PaaS) category; however, it is not like most other PaaS tools. Strings lets you customize how much control and insight your company needs into the underlying infrastructure stack, while providing an appropriate level of abstraction to suit your needs.

If your technology stack and/or mindset requires treating your virtual servers persistently, Strings lets you do that: log into your servers, run command operating system commands, debug performance bottlenecks, and more. Strings will let you manage user authentication and access control, and will populate various aspects of the virtual machine with metadata to keep you informed.

If your technology stack and/or mindset allow you to treat your servers ephemerally, Strings will abstract away all the underlying instances from your user experience. From automatic naming schemes and code deployment to full load balancer and DNS management, Strings will allow you to spin up and down infrastructure as necessary to fit your business.

We highly recommend leveraging a mix of both persistent and ephemeral virtual servers as needed! Relational databases, for instance, don't work so well in the "ephemeral" model, no matter how hard people try.

Where did the idea for Bitlancer Strings come from?

We built Strings because our customers kept asking us to build them custom cloud automation tools. Many companies were not getting enough (if any) value out of their cloud infrastructure, and some were paying *more* than they had been paying for dedicated physical servers in the past. Giving up insight and control over their infrastructure was not an option in many cases, so what they needed was a way to achieve "PaaS-like" automation within their own cloud infrastructure (IaaS) accounts.