

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR MYSQL APPLICATIONS WITH MARIADB

An Executive Brief for Technology Leaders Considering a
Switch from Oracle MySQL

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O1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MySQL 8.0 reaches end-of-life in April 2026, forcing an immediate decision for organizations on that version. But even if you’ve already upgraded to 8.4 LTS or beyond, the underlying problem remains: Oracle’s investment in MySQL is declining. In contrast, MariaDB continues active innovation and offers your applications a brighter future with cutting-edge features and support for AI innovations.

The data tells the story. Commits to the MySQL codebase dropped 78% between 2010 and 2024. In September 2025, approximately 70 engineers were laid off from the core team. Q4 2025 commits fell 69% year-over-year. Oracle’s focus has shifted to AI infrastructure deals. MySQL is in maintenance mode, with minimal effort and bug fixes without innovation, leaving your applications stuck in the past. Even Oracle’s recent MySQL blog promising more community visibility mentions no features for modern AI applications.

MariaDB, the fork that started as MySQL’s continuation, has continued as the platform where innovation happens. While MySQL has languished, MariaDB has shipped temporal tables, native vector search, the MCP Server for AI agents, MariaDB Exa for real-time analytics, and most recently announced the acquisition of GridGain Systems, the creator of Apache Ignite, bringing sub-millisecond in-memory computing to the platform for agentic AI workloads.

MariaDB offers a path that protects three things technology leaders care about:

DECISION PILLAR	WHAT IT MEANS
Preserve your application investment	No rewrites required for most MySQL workloads. Same SQL, same drivers, same team skills.
One accountable vendor	Database, clustering, proxy, analytics, and support from one organization. If something breaks, one call.
Lower long-term risk and cost	Active development, 50%+ licensing savings, no EOL uncertainty.

02 THE MYSQL TRAJECTORY: STAGNATION VS. INNOVATION

If you're on MySQL 8.0: April 2026 is your hard deadline. After its end-of-life (EOL), Oracle stops providing security patches. Regulatory frameworks like PCI-DSS, HIPAA, and SOC 2 require supported software. Auditors will flag unsupported databases as material findings. Be aware that Oracle has [flagged](#) write-heavy workloads perform slower on 8.4 so upgrading may require additional hardware.

If you're on MySQL 8.4 LTS or newer: You've bought time, but the underlying trajectory hasn't changed. The same declining investment, the same maintenance-mode development, the same strategic deprioritization. Your next EOL will arrive with the same constraints.

The numbers behind the stagnation:

- Commits to MySQL's git repository declined 78% from 2010 to 2024 (22,360 → 4,824)
- Bug-fix to feature ratio or how many changes were maintenance versus innovation shifted from 1.4:1 (2014) to 5-6:1 (2025), the signature of maintenance mode
- No community innovation. 98% of commits come from Oracle employees, and Oracle does not accept community contributions; there is no other source of innovation as they change priorities.
- Q4 2025 commits dropped 69% versus the same period in 2024 following layoffs

The Community Edition is shrinking. Oracle has removed features from the free edition (Query Cache, NDB Auto-Installer, `mysql_native_password`) while locking essentials behind proprietary, closed-source Enterprise offerings (hot backup, thread pool, audit logging). MariaDB continues to provide these to the open source community.

Oracle's priorities have moved to AI infrastructure. Oracle's [February 2026 financial results](#) report makes its priorities even clearer: the company is investing aggressively in AI infrastructure and cloud capacity, not centering its strategy on the database layer itself, let alone its MySQL database layer. Oracle kept its fiscal 2026 capital spending target at \$50 billion, said it had already raised \$30 billion toward that expansion and tied the spending directly to the wave of AI demand behind its cloud business. By Q3 FY2026, Oracle Cloud Infrastructure revenue had surged 84% year-over-year to \$4.9 billion, total cloud revenue had reached \$8.9 billion and remaining performance obligations had climbed to \$553 billion, with Oracle saying most of the Q3 increase came from large-scale AI contracts. Meanwhile, Oracle's roadmap for the next MySQL Community release does not clearly commit to major AI features.

The [Stargate project](#), Oracle's partnership with OpenAI, is building the largest AI supercomputer cluster in Abilene, Texas. [OCI Zettascale10](#) connects hundreds of thousands of NVIDIA GPUs to deliver 16 zettaFLOPS of peak performance. On earnings calls, Oracle leadership discusses AI infrastructure, GPU capacity, and data center construction timelines. MySQL doesn't come up.

This isn't speculation about Oracle's priorities. It's what they tell their investors. MySQL is a revenue line to maintain, not a platform to advance.

MariaDB's trajectory is the opposite. Active development continues across the platform: temporal tables for compliance, vector search and AI RAG for AI workloads, the MCP Server for AI agent integration and Exa for real-time analytics. In March 2026, MariaDB [announced the acquisition of GridGain Systems](#), the creator of open source Apache Ignite, adding sub-millisecond in-memory computing for agentic AI workloads. A MariaDB Foundation ensures open source commitment while the commercial entity is focused entirely on making MariaDB successful, with no agenda to upsell you to a different platform.

03 YOUR AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Stay on MySQL 8.0: No migration effort, no application changes. But after April 2026, you're running unpatched, unsupported software. Security vulnerabilities accumulate. Compliance audits fail. Technical debt compounds.

Upgrade to MySQL 8.4 LTS: Weeks of effort, minimal application changes, and performance regression testing due to write performance issues especially with consistent replicas. You defer the EOL deadline but don't address the underlying stagnation. The same declining development continues. You'll face this evaluation again.

Migrate to PostgreSQL: Six to 18 months of engineering effort. PostgreSQL is excellent technology, but transaction semantics differ from MySQL in ways that don't surface in unit tests. They appear in production, under load, when concurrency patterns expose behavioral differences in locking, isolation levels, and transaction handling. Organizations report that what looked like straightforward migration in development required extensive application testing and rework once production traffic exposed these differences. That means timeline slip risk, unplanned engineering rework, and reduced confidence in delivery commitments.

Migrate to MariaDB: Usually similar effort to a MySQL major version upgrade, minimal to no application changes. Same protocol, same SQL, same connectors. Your engineering capacity stays focused on business initiatives rather than platform churn. By migrating to MariaDB you leverage a database with active development, expanded capabilities, and aligned vendor incentives. Your applications gain access to temporal tables for compliance, native vector search and AI RAG for AI initiatives without parallel infrastructure, Exa for real-time analytics, and MariaDB Cloud for managed deployment without cloud provider lock-in.

Decision Summary

PATH	EFFORT	APPLICATION CHANGES	RISK	OUTCOME
Stay On 8.0	None	None	High (unpatched)	Debt accumulates
MySQL 8.4 LTS	Weeks	Minimal	Medium (stagnating)	Defers decision
PostgreSQL	6-18 months	Extensive	Medium (rewrite risk)	New platform, new skills
MariaDB	Weeks	None to minimal	Low	Future-proofed

The PostgreSQL ecosystem tradeoff: Beyond application rewrites, PostgreSQL's ecosystem is deliberately decentralized. High availability, backup, monitoring, and support come from different vendors with different priorities. When something breaks at 2 a.m., you're coordinating multiple parties with separate support contracts and different escalation paths.

The MariaDB difference: Same protocol, same SQL, same connectors. Your applications work. Your team's expertise transfers. And you have one hand to shake for database, clustering, proxy, analytics, and support. One vendor accountable for the entire stack.

O4 WHY MARIADB IS THE NATURAL PROGRESSION

Your applications continue working, preserving engineering capacity

This matters more than any feature list. MariaDB migration preserves your application investment:

WHAT'S PRESERVED	STRATEGIC VALUE
SQL queries	No rewriting, no regression risk, no delivery delays
Stored procedures	Business logic stays intact
ORM configurations	Hibernate, SQLAlchemy, Django work unchanged
Drivers (JDBC, ODBC, PHP, Python, .NET)	No application-layer changes
Team expertise	Your MySQL skills transfer directly

Your engineering teams stay focused on business initiatives rather than database platform migration. That's the real value of compatibility.

Migration timelines from actual deployments:

- **Glarotech/PepperShop:** "Less effort than minor OS upgrades"
- **Switch.ch:** "Seamless migration"
- **Esade Business School:** "Very straightforward"

Edge cases exist such as complex replication topologies, MySQL-specific plugins, and direct system table manipulation. MariaDB's assessment tool identifies these before you commit.

One vendor, one architecture, clear accountability

PostgreSQL's distributed ecosystem means assembling components from different sources: database from the community, HA from one vendor, backup from another, monitoring from a third, support from a fourth. Each has different release cycles, different priorities, different support structures. When you need help, you're navigating multiple relationships.

MariaDB provides an integrated stack: database server, MaxScale proxy, Galera clustering, enterprise manager, Kubernetes operator, and Exa analytics. MariaDB goes further with vector support and AI features built directly into the same engine and combines that with enterprise support from one organization. When you need architectural guidance or production support, you're working with one vendor and the engineers who built and understand the entire stack.

One hand to shake. One vendor accountable. One relationship to manage.

Founded by MySQL's creators

MariaDB was forked by Michael "Monty" Widenius and the original MySQL team after Oracle's acquisition. This isn't a reimplementation. It's the continuation and evolution of the MySQL codebase by the people who built it. The Foundation ensures open source commitment while the commercial entity drives the engineering and roadmap as well as delivers enterprise products and support.

O5 CAPABILITIES THAT ADDRESS REAL BUSINESS PROBLEMS

Compliance without custom tooling

Organizations in financial services, healthcare, and government face rigorous requirements: complete historical records of data changes, point-in-time data queries for investigations, audit trails that satisfy regulators. Building this traditionally requires additional tooling, custom triggers, or expensive add-ons.

MariaDB's temporal tables provide this natively. System-versioned tables automatically maintain complete history. Application-time periods enable bitemporal queries. Point-in-time queries show exactly what data looked like at any moment. MySQL has nothing comparable.

AI capabilities without parallel infrastructure

Adding AI to existing applications typically means provisioning separate vector databases, building synchronization pipelines, and managing additional infrastructure with separate teams and budgets.

MariaDB's native vector search keeps AI vectors alongside transactional data, queried with the same SQL your team knows. Independent benchmarks show performance on par with specialized vector databases. The MCP Server provides a standardized interface for AI agents. AI RAG delivers out-of-the-box retrieval-augmented generation.

AI capabilities extend your existing investment rather than duplicating it.

Real-time analytics without ETL delays

Decision support on live operational data, without the cost and complexity of ETL pipelines and separate data warehouses.

MariaDB Exa (powered by Exasol) runs analytical queries up to 800x faster than transactional databases, directly on live operational data.

CAPABILITY	MARIADB EXA	ORACLE HEATWAVE
Deployment flexibility	On-premises, any cloud, hybrid	OCI primary, limited AWS
Cost predictability	Flexible, scale to zero	Always-on provisioned billing
Time-to-insight	Near real-time from live data	Requires data loading
ETL complexity	Eliminated	Required for non-MySQL sources
Self-managed option	Yes	No
Vendor dependency	Low (multicloud, portable)	High (Oracle ecosystem)

The takeaway: Exa delivers analytics flexibility and cost control. HeatWave locks you into Oracle’s cloud and billing model.

06 WHY HYPERSCALERS DON'T SOLVE THIS PROBLEM

AWS RDS and Aurora still run Oracle's MySQL. Same declining development, same EOL timelines. Extended support costs extra. You've compounded vendor dependencies: Oracle's roadmap decisions plus AWS pricing.

HeatWave locks you to Oracle. Capable technology, but optimized for Oracle Cloud Infrastructure with AWS as your only other option without a complicated cross cloud connection. No on-premises option. Always-on billing with provisioned instances. If your strategy requires multi-cloud, hybrid infrastructure, or cost optimization through scale-to-zero, HeatWave doesn't fit.

MariaDB Cloud is managed without lock-in. Deploy on AWS, Azure or Google Cloud. Scale to zero and pay for actual usage. Run the same MariaDB on-premises, in your VPC, or fully managed including bring your own account (BYOA). If requirements change, MariaDB's portability protects your options.

07 COMPARISON: MARIADB VS. ORACLE MYSQL VS. HEATWAVE

CAPABILITY	MARIADB ENTERPRISE	MARIADB CLOUD	ORACLE MYSQL	HEATWAVE
No application changes required	●	●	●	●
Deploy on-prem or secure networks	●	○	●	○
Active upstream development	●	●	○	◐
Serverless/Scale to zero	○	●	○	○
Native AI/Vector support	●	●	○	●
Built-in compliance (temporal tables)	●	●	○	○
Real-time analytics (no ETL)	●	●	○	◐
Active-active replication	●	○	◐	○
Multicloud managed	◐	●	◐	○
One vendor, full stack	●	●	◐	◐

Legend: ● Yes | ◐ Partial | ○ No

08 VALIDATING THE DECISION: 30-DAY CHECKLIST

WEEK	ACTIVITY	SUCCESS CRITERIA
1	Run MariaDB migration assessment	Compatibility report with specific items to address
2	Deploy against non-critical workload, replay traffic	Equivalent performance, no behavioral differences
2	Test failover and recovery	Recovery time meets requirements
3	Build 3-year TCO comparison	Clear cost model vs. current state
3	Engage MariaDB support with technical question	Response quality meets expectations
4	Talk to reference customer in your industry	Peer validation of migration experience

09 RECOMMENDATION

MySQL's trajectory is clear: maintenance mode, declining investment, shrinking Community Edition. Whether you're facing the April 2026 EOL or running a newer version, the underlying platform dynamics don't change.

MariaDB offers a migration path that preserves your application investment, consolidates vendor accountability, and positions you on a platform with active development. The same SQL, the same drivers, the same team skills, with capabilities MySQL doesn't offer.

Next steps:

1. **Migration assessment:** MariaDB provides tooling that identifies compatibility considerations for your specific workloads
2. **Reference customers:** Ask MariaDB to connect you with peers who've completed migrations
3. **Proof of concept:** Deploy against a non-critical workload and let your team experience it
4. **Architecture review:** Discuss your requirements with MariaDB solution engineers

The organizations acting now will have completed their transitions while others are still evaluating.

Learn more: mariadb.com/migrations/mysql-to-mariadb

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