

ActiveBatch®

Customer IT Automation Success Story

Partnership HealthPlan of California

Turns to ActiveBatch to Automate Core Insurance Policies, Save Money and Allow IT to Speak "One Common Code"



Company: Partnership HealthPlan of California

Industry: Healthcare

Customer Site: Fairfield, California, United States

Brief Company Overview:

The Partnership HealthPlan of California, "The HealthPlan," began operations in May 1994, and is a public/private organization designed to provide a cost-effective health care delivery system to Medi-Cal recipients in California's Solano, Napa, Yolo, and Sonoma Counties.

The HealthPlan's goals are to improve access, quality and cost effectiveness, through a managed care system.





SUCCESS STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Streamlining Processes is Paramount
- The Need for a Centralized Job Scheduling Solution
- Take Thousands of Lines of Custom Script & Encapsulate Them Into Reusable Jobs
- Believe in a Scheduler That is Simple and Inexpensive to Scale and Feature Rich
- Utilize Single Jobs as Templates, Reference Them Within Workflows, Reduce Custom Code

Strengthening Infrastructure

For Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC), providing accessible and cost efficient healthcare to 180,000 people throughout Northern California while managing an expected growth rate of 30% through 2014 requires strengthening of internal infrastructure and streamlining of processes. To Kevin Boyer, Lead Systems Analyst/Programmer at PHC, IT is no exception to this.

PHC is a private/public healthcare organization that provides healthcare to Medi-Cal, Healthy Kids, Healthy Families and Medicare Part D programs in California’s Solano, Yolo, and Sonoma counties. With the business growing and operations expanding to other counties throughout California, the need to update legacy IT infrastructure and streamline operations became paramount; and at the core of streamlining these processes is ActiveBatch Enterprise Job Scheduling and Workload Automation.

Transitioning to UNIX

The call for a centralized job scheduling solution began with the migration from a legacy application written in COBOL to a UNIX platform in 2008 to host PHC’s core membership application. Prior to the migration, PHC relied on a homegrown scheduling solution. With the new application structure, Boyer realized that a change was in order. “With UNIX, we were going to have a lot more jobs and a lot more coordination between jobs. It quickly became obvious that relying on our home grown scheduler would become too resource intensive from a staffing perspective. We would have to create long jobs constructed out of custom code and string them together, jamming parameters by hard coding them into the jobs. These job strings would be difficult to monitor and correct if something went wrong.”

Focusing on member satisfaction

* Source: Partnership HealthPlan of California Annual report (2009-2010)

Survey Question	Results
Overall satisfaction with PHC.....	86%
Overall satisfaction with care received.....	88%
Overall satisfaction with personal doctor.....	94%
Overall satisfaction with specialists.....	90%

When asked if they had ever had a pneumonia shot, only 56% of members responded that they had received the vaccine. We will be working with members and providers to increase awareness of the importance and availability of the pneumonia vaccine.

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Learn more at ActiveBatch.com 



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Thousands of Lines of Script Become Reusable Jobs

At the cornerstone of PHC's automation initiatives is the ability to take thousands of lines of custom script and encapsulate them as reusable jobs that can be linked into workflows within ActiveBatch. One such example is a process run with ActiveBatch for patient eligibility. PHC will receive data files from the state of California containing member's information. That information eventually ends up in a database on PHC's side. "It's a long road between a flat file and relational database structure," Boyer says. "Overall, the eligibility process contains over 30 job steps that include many procedures, such as data validation, mapping member information and posting to an Oracle database. Before ActiveBatch, we'd bury all these separate components into one long job that was hundreds of lines of custom code."

With ActiveBatch, Boyer has divided the processes into discrete job steps within ActiveBatch that pass dependencies and processing parameters down through the workflow upon completion of each job step. Moreover, if there is a problem with a particular job, Boyer can fix that particular step and continue with the workflow. "Before, if something failed, we'd have to chop up the job flow, eliminating sections that already processed and sometimes putting in new code depending on the original problem - the recovery process was horrible. ActiveBatch provides a recovery structure that makes it easy to recover the process flow and get things up and running again."

A Scheduler to Believe In

Boyer elected to go an easier route and evaluate the market for a job scheduling solution. PHC went to market in the beginning of 2008 to evaluate the vendor landscape and quickly determined ActiveBatch from Advanced Systems Concepts would be the solution from which to grow the IT organization around. It quickly became obvious to Boyer and the IT team that competitive offerings would be too difficult and too expensive to scale versus the required capabilities moving forward. "I became a believer real quickly."

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Partnership HealthPlan of California & ActiveBatch

ActiveBatch also supports PHC's claim processing across its various service offerings, such as the Healthy Kids Health Plan, Medicare and Medi-Cal programs. While each program has unique claim processing requirements, from an IT standpoint many of the steps involved in each process are identical. Boyer leverages ActiveBatch to re-use common job steps across various product lines. "Many times, it's the same job, just run with different parameters," Boyer says. "Each product line has its own set of claim processing and eligibility processes. ActiveBatch automates all the processes and makes it much, much easier to manage and execute on a daily basis."

To execute this, Boyer makes extensive use of variables and reference jobs within ActiveBatch, which gives users the ability to use a single job within ActiveBatch as a template to be "referenced" throughout multiple workflows, thus reducing the amount of custom code Boyer must develop. Perhaps more importantly, it's also paid dividends in reducing the amount of code Boyer must maintain moving forward. "ActiveBatch gives the ability to make a change at the template level, and the changes are automatically passed down to the rest of the referenced jobs. It's a big time saver."

Overall, Boyer views ActiveBatch's benefits going beyond just time savings. "We're a small shop. I take care of the entire organization's business process scheduling and I wouldn't be able to do my job without ActiveBatch," Boyer says. "It's simply not possible for one person to manage and monitor nearly 500 jobs in a single night. Without ActiveBatch, we'd have to hire another two or three people, which saves us approximately \$200,000 a year."

ActiveBatch has also made the transition from PHC's legacy, COBOL-based technology to more modern coding languages that better support UNIX, such as Java and PL/SQL, much easier. While large portions of PHC's infrastructure is still COBOL-based, ActiveBatch has allowed Boyer to "replace large 'chunks' of our COBOL code in process flows with job steps that use PL/SQL or other languages," thanks in large part to the fact that ActiveBatch is script-language independent.

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A 360-Degree View of Scheduling

ActiveBatch's graphical user interface provides PHC with a "topographical" view of processes and scheduling across the enterprise. In particular, the "Operations View" provides Boyer with a real-time display for large scale job processing across jobs that have already processed, those currently processing and those about to.

The "Alerts" and "Notification" views have also proved popular by providing Kevin with a shortlist of alert-able audits that require an immediate response. "Not all of our jobs are critical," Boyer says. "The Alerts view shows me only those that require immediate action."

And when immediate action is required, PHC has created an alert that calls upon a Windows script that pushes that alert message to a SQL Server. A telephone application registers the entry in the SQL database and calls a programmer with an automated message. While Boyer realizes that ActiveBatch supports alert messages via emails, texting and social media, "some of us still use old-school flip phones here, so checking social media channels and emails can be difficult. We are in the planning stages to implement some of these more sophisticated ActiveBatch notification methods. Until that happens, we were able to customize ActiveBatch to allow us to alert us via a channel that works best for us, and that's a testament to the product."

Moving forward, ActiveBatch will continue to be at the center of the company's IT transition and serve as the "quarterback" for automating an increasing number of processes associated with PHC's service offerings. "We only expect ActiveBatch to handle more and more of our IT workload," says Ben Jones, formerly Manager, Systems Development at PHC but now operating in a different role within the company. "Working with Advanced Systems Concepts is a pleasure and was one of the best decisions I ever made as an IT manager."

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