

ma NEWS

Real-Time Job Scheduler Gets Updated

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Abstract: New release of ActiveBatch job scheduling software adds audit compliance, pre-defined job libraries, a multi-access capability, and mobility into the mix.

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Advanced Systems Concepts Inc. today announced a new version of its real-time job scheduling and IT automation system, adding a handful of new features that aim to give manufacturers more control over workflows, the ability to build more flexibility into processes, and remote access to the system.

ActiveBatch V6, which will be available in April, is a major evolution of the product, according to company officials. The ActiveBatch product can automatically trigger a job from any operating environment — be it Windows, Unix, Linux, or OpenVMS — and between any enterprise or manufacturing applications.

Company officials noted that it is not a "batch" application in the traditional sense of recipe management. Rather, ActiveBatch interacts with other IT systems and provides a way to automatically trigger jobs based on the completion of the preceding process.

For example, if a sales organization forecasts that it needs 1,000 widgets from production and subsequently receives a customer order for 2,000 widgets, ActiveBatch can trigger the supply chain application to automatically order more materials and reset manufacturing demand schedules, according to Jim Manias, vice president of marketing and sales at Advanced Systems Concepts.

"Many major ERP solution providers have come up with the idea of a single instance, having everything within their individual application," Manias said in an interview with *Managing Automation*. "One area they tend to neglect is the idea of automation software. That is, the ability to integrate and trigger and manage these processes by constraints."

To that end, IT departments often build slack time into manufacturing schedules — just in case a job isn't completed on time. But if the job is completed on time, a traditional job scheduling process will only kick off the next event after the cushion time is expended, not in reaction to real-time events. ActiveBatch, for example, defines how to pass information from a sales forecasting system to a general ledger. "ActiveBatch integrates those workflows and passes information from one to the other... to help people get things completed on time," Manias said.

ActiveBatch can handle up to 1.3 million jobs in a day and can connect to up to 2,000 servers. Version 6, which has been about two years in the making, includes new features including built-in job libraries, allowing the assembly of specific job types (transact SQL, e-mail jobs, loop, etc.), thereby eliminating unnecessary scripting. In addition, an Audit Compliance capability can

establish policies for modifying objects in the job scheduling system, including the creation of custom fields or other variables that control user input for tracking changes.

A feature called Virtual Root allows ActiveBatch to be run across an entire organization as a single job scheduler with many access points, the company said. In this set up, individuals, teams, departments, or business units can log in with protected access, and jobs and plans can be isolated from others as necessary.

ActiveBatch V6 also has an optional Web server interface that allows users to access and control the application from a PDA. Currently, Advanced Systems Concepts has a Blackberry interface for that kind of operation, the company said.

While ActiveBatch, which starts at \$8,000 for a single license, is an IT-oriented job scheduling application, the company noted that about 25% of its 1,200 ActiveBatch customers are manufacturers. And although ERP, CRM, and SCM are the applications it most often interacts with, it can work with any manufacturing application, as it is "completely script-language independent," Manias said.