

ActiveBatch®

Customer IT Automation Success Story

XTRA Lease: Automating 1.3 Million Jobs Per Year



Company: XTRA Lease

Industry: Transportation

Customer Site: St. Louis, Missouri, United States

Company Overview:

With more than 60 locations and a fleet of more than 80,000 trailers, XTRA Lease is one of the largest over-the-road trailer rental and leasing companies in North America.

XTRA Lease offers an in-house, 24-hour emergency road service, RoadWatch™, and offers trailer tracking technology for all over-the-road rentals.



XTRA
LEASE

SUCCESS STORY HIGHLIGHTS



- The importance of centralized monitoring
- Centralize job scheduling processes to improve service levels and flexibility
- Benefits of the ActiveBatch "Daily Activity" View and ActiveBatch Alerts
- Keep applications synchronized and coordinate customer-facing activities
- Quality of Advanced Systems Concepts' Technical Support

Keeping the Wheels Rolling with Workload Automation

When you're in the business of renting thousands of semi-trailers to customers across North America, timely scheduling is critical. Such is the mindset at XTRA Lease, one of the largest semi-trailer rental companies in North America, and it's a conviction that pervades the company from its customer-facing initiatives straight through to its IT department.

XTRA Lease's workload automation solution is no exception to this rule, says Bob Lambrecht, CTO of XTRA Lease. Three years ago, a heterogeneous environment of disparate applications created silos of information that were joined by custom scripting. "We had no way to centrally monitor the multitude of batch jobs we were running," Lambrecht says. "We had no master job schedule; no idea when certain jobs were running, when jobs failed, etc. We were relying on internal people or customers raising a red flag when the data didn't look right because a job had failed the night before. Finding that information out from a customer isn't a great way of doing business."

XTRA Lease required a solution to centralize its job scheduling processes to improve service levels and build flexibility into its IT environment. The answer XTRA Lease

found was ActiveBatch, an Enterprise Job Scheduling and Workload Automation solution by Advanced Systems Concepts. "We selected ActiveBatch for its rich functionality, its cross-platform capabilities and integration points," Lambrecht says. "The value ActiveBatch offered made the investment an easy one."

"We selected ActiveBatch for its rich functionality, its cross-platform capabilities, and integration points. The value ActiveBatch offered made the investment an easy one."



Learn more at ActiveBatch.com



ASCI ADVANCED
SYSTEMS CONCEPTS, INC.

A Centralized View

Operating across a Windows/HP-UX environment, XTRA Lease runs 1.3 million jobs a year via ActiveBatch V8 to the tune of a 99.1% success rate, Lambrecht says. "We now know what jobs run, on which machine they run, and when they run. Most importantly, when something does fail, we know when and why and can resolve the issue before our customers discover it."



ActiveBatch's "Daily Activity" view provides the IT operations team with a dashboard to monitor jobs as they run throughout the day while ActiveBatch alerts provide email alerts based on job failures in real-time. At its core, many of the jobs ActiveBatch orchestrates are batch-oriented jobs that move data between heterogeneous business applications, including passing accounts payable, invoicing data, and asset management information to keep systems updated and synchronized. These applications include the company's branch rental and lease system, Microsoft business intelligence solutions, and PeopleSoft.

In addition to these core systems, ActiveBatch also keeps applications synchronized that are paramount for the management of its fleet of trailers, including Qualcomm wireless communications software, which XTRA Lease leverages to do "trailer tracking," Lambrecht says. Qualcomm, combined with XTRA Lease's website, allows customers to better manage their fleet of XTRA Lease trailers. At the opposite end of the spectrum, XTRA Lease's transaction system contains the rental and lease agree-

ments with customers. With more than 80,000 trailers in the XTRA Lease fleet, sometimes things "get out of sync," Lambrecht says. "With ActiveBatch, we run a workflow that ensures that the data at Qualcomm and the data in our transaction system matches up. This workflow goes out, compares the data, makes any necessary corrections, and then pushes this information to our website. It ensures that our customers have access to the correct trailer information."

In terms of product support, Lambrecht says he's found Advanced Systems Concepts more than accommodating, both in terms of getting started with the product and ongoing support. XTRA Lease launched with an initial pilot and implementation with only training materials and phone support. "It speaks to the ability to use the product leveraging just the online documentation and the ability to bring up helpful information."

Lambrecht also says the company found Advanced Systems Concept's (ASCI) knowledgebase very helpful for post-implementation assistance. "ActiveBatch is used to orchestrate some very difficult business processes. The knowledgebase was great because it gave us the ability to lookup answers on the fly." Phone support was also present for any bugs discovered, Lambrecht says. "When we did discover a bug, ASCI support created a patch and resolved any issues in a timely manner. The company has also been very open to our feedback and has based future enhancements on our input."

"We now know what jobs run, on which machine they run, and when they run. Most importantly, when something does fail, we know when and why and can resolve the issue before our customers discover it."

Automating Workflows and Reducing Breakdowns

ActiveBatch also serves as the “quarterback” that coordinates a series of customer-facing activities. Semi-trailers, like most vehicles, require periodic, preventative maintenance to maintain safety standards and to meet regulatory requirements. To keep customers informed of impending upkeep, XTRA Lease proactively sends monthly preventive maintenance reports to customers currently renting a trailer. To automate the process, XTRA Lease leverages ActiveBatch to draw the information via data-base reporting services, creates a PDF file, and emails the corresponding information to the correct customers.

Along the same lines, expiring insurance reports are also issued to customers. ActiveBatch runs a workflow via a database reporting service to draw those customers whose insurance will expire in a given time period and distributes email notifications to those customers. “They’re both proactive approaches to helping our customers maintain their equipment and keep their insurance up to date,” Lambrecht says. “By automating these processes via ActiveBatch, it allows XTRA Lease to provide better customer service and help streamline operations throughout our branches.”

“By automating these processes via ActiveBatch, it allows XTRA Lease to provide better customer service and help streamline operations throughout our branches.”

ActiveBatch serves as the “quarterback” that coordinates XTRA Lease's customer-facing activities.