

ActiveBatch®

Customer IT Automation Success Story

De Telefoongids BV Improves Service Levels and Exceptional Product Support



Company: De Telefoongids & Gouden Gids

Industry: Global Classified Advertising

Customer Site: Amsterdam, Netherlands

Brief Company Overview:

De Telefoongids BV is the publisher of the Dutch Yellow Pages in which 700,000 companies, organizations and individuals are listed.

De Telefoongids BV's mission is to be the absolute first choice in local search and advertising.



SUCCESS STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Dramatic Drop in Job-Related Errors
- Support for Multiple Operating Environments
- Flexible Licensing Scheme Maximizes ROI
- Fast, Global Support from ASCI Headquarters Experts

Challenge

De Telefoongids BV, Formerly Truvo Nederland BV, has published the Dutch Yellow Pages in the Netherlands since 1964. The Yellow Pages contains the listings of more than 700,000 companies, organizations and individuals and is available as a book, on the internet and to mobile phones.

De Telefoongids BV, headquartered in Amsterdam, employs about 650 people, including around 350 telesales and field sales employees.

For years, De Telefoongids BV processed its massive book production data on an OpenVMS-based computing system. The majority of batch applications are still supported under OpenVMS; not long ago, however, De Telefoongids BV made the decision to unify its processing exclusively under the Windows operating system. Doing so necessitated a new, cross-platform job scheduling application.

"Our OpenVMS batch processing has historically been managed with DCL scripting," said Fred Overduin, IT Operations Manager for De Telefoongids BV. "Shifting to Windows obviously changes that situation."

We realized our new application would need to not only support OpenVMS and Windows, but also to transition from OpenVMS to Windows without having to restate all our workflows."

As Overduin's team began evaluating different commercially-available products, its disappointment level rose quickly. "It seemed that every product had a drawback. Some were too cumbersome, others didn't have the necessary functionality - and if they had the features and convenience we wanted, they were too expensive," Overduin recalled.

A Strategic Application

ActiveBatch is an enterprise-class job scheduling solution that coordinates the operation of applications, processes, scripts and standalone tasks. Its cross-platform capability allows it to manage jobs across all the major operating environments—Windows (Vista/XP/2003/2000), Linux (Red Hat and SUSE), Sun Solaris, IBM AIX, HP-UX, HP Tru64 Unix and OpenVMS.

Unlike many other products in its class, ActiveBatch is designed to be more than a job scheduling application. It removes "slack time" by starting jobs or job plans according to additional, more advanced triggers such as event or data state, thereby maximizing system downtime and improving resource utilization.

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As a strategic corporate application, ActiveBatch also allows end-users to directly access and even define job schedules according to security rules set by the IT security staff. Finally, the product delivers the control and accountability needed in today's business world by documenting job changes where needed for regulatory compliance purposes.

"Our team underwent a month-long review and trial of ActiveBatch. We were impressed with its ease of use, its complete set of features, and its strong price-value benefits," Overduin said. Soon after, the recommendation was made to acquire the application.

Easy, Expert Support

Installation and training for ActiveBatch were both straightforward. "We had to accelerate our schedule due to another consolidation and standardization project that was underway," noted Overduin. "Despite the rush, there were no major problems related to the product itself. Our system engineer underwent a short four-hour training session—that was it. And the product support was exceptional."

Of particular note, Overduin said, was the prompt and knowledgeable service De Telefoongids BV received from U.S.-based Advanced Systems Concepts. "I've had experience in the past with U.S. companies that manage their service requests through UK or EMEA subsidiaries. It simply doesn't work," he stated. "Getting support—even with the difference in time zones factored in—directly from the 'experts' is the best!"

De Telefoongids BV uses Intel-based HP hardware to run its database server, applications and clients; its operating systems are a mix of Windows XP, 2000, 2003 and 2003 Terminal Server. Across all these infrastructure elements, Overduin reported that ActiveBatch has been reliable and simple to use.

"ActiveBatch is very good at handling multiple queues over multiple servers. The drag-and-drop graphical GUI makes it easy for us to establish workflows," Overduin said. He also mentioned that ActiveBatch makes it easy to track issues with job execution via support for SNMP traps.

"We've integrated ActiveBatch alerts into our network operations management software," he noted, "so we are instantly aware of any problems with ongoing job executions."

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Points-Based Licensing

Perhaps most valuable to De Telefoongids BV from a business standpoint, as it migrates from OpenVMS to Windows, is ActiveBatch's points-based licensing arrangement. Many enterprises these days are making decisions to unify their processing platforms to a Windows-centric environment; to support this situation, Advanced Systems Concepts allows users to buy "license points" that can be apportioned to different operating systems in whatever proportion the customer sees fit. Support costs and execution agents are also points-based, enabling customers to create a licensing mix that exactly meets their configurations and business needs.

"Our migration from OpenVMS to Windows is a six-month project. The licensing scheme in ActiveBatch allows us to add temporary licenses over this period—with or without cross-platform capability—as our needs change," commented Overduin. "There is no question this level of flexibility has made our transition less expensive to achieve."

Impact

With its move to Windows well underway, the De Telefoongids BV IT team is pleased with the ROI, functionality and business benefits it has experienced with ActiveBatch. Despite the number of new job plans that have been added, service levels have improved and job-related errors have dropped dramatically.

According to Overduin, the man-hours previously devoted to job scheduling under the previous home-grown scheme are now freed up for other challenges. "Currently we're looking to give more control of job and job plan scheduling to our end users at De Telefoongids BV. Our plan is to bring IT to a more facilitating role," Overduin stated. "We believe that our book production processing will be demonstrably more efficient at this time next year, thanks in large part to ActiveBatch."

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