ActiveBatch®

Customer IT Automation Success Story

RelayHealth Insures Reliable, Centralized IT Process Automation

RelayHealth

Company: RelayHealth
Industry: Healthcare Services
Customer Site: Atlanta, Georgia, United States

Brief Company Overview:
RelayHealth provides the connectivity and solutions that enable constituents across healthcare to exchange information securely and conveniently. By connecting patients, providers, pharmacies, payers and pharmaceutical manufacturers, RelayHealth offers real-time solutions to streamline interactions throughout healthcare.

RelayHealth

SUCCESS STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Achieve Real-Time Business Continuity
- Drag-and-Drop Production Ready Job Steps to Create Workflows Without the Need for Scripting
- Centralized Management for Compliance and Control to Ensure Unauthorized Are Not Made to Production Workflows

A Physical and Virtual Infrastructure

RelayHealth sits at a critical junction within the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries, connecting the people and information to facilitate better service. Specifically, RelayHealth, a division of McKesson, offers connectivity services and integration by providing clinical, financial and administrative communication between patients, providers, pharmacies, manufacturers and more. "We're the ones in the background that help make everything go round and round," says Tracy Thompson, Senior Director of Technical Services for RelayHealth.

To facilitate and automate these interactions with third-party vendors, customers and partners, RelayHealth relies on a vast array of both overnight batch processes and workloads that run in real-time, executing across an infrastructure that consists of both physical and virtualized machines. To improve the coordination of these processes, in 2010 RelayHealth went to market for a workload automation solution to centralize its IT process automation requirements. That solution was ActiveBatch® Job Scheduling and Workload Automation from Advanced Systems Concepts, Inc.

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From Scripts to a Real-Time Business Continuance Solution

At the core of RelayHealth's business are claims, including medical, pharmaceutical and dental, sent to RelayHealth 24 hours a day, containing patient information such as eligibility and prescription data, prior authorizations and more. "Let's say somebody switches employers and receives a new insurance plan with different benefits. We receive that information in a batch file. It's our job to go in and term your coverage so you'd be activated on the new plan and send the updated data back to the pharmacy, insurer, whomever," Thompson says.

To automate these processes previously, a collection of Window and Perl scripts were used, executed by a disparate collection of older, manually-operated scheduling solutions. "We had no central point of control or monitoring; everything was based on basic date/time execution" Thompson says. "We needed a real-time, business continuance solution."

ASCI ADVANCED SYSTEMS CONCEPTS, INC.

These scripts have now been moved into ActiveBatch, where Thompson's team leverages both the Date/Time and event automation architecture within ActiveBatch to trigger their execution. "ActiveBatch has automated our batch operations entirely by looking at the files FTP route and either triggering the workflow with a file trigger or set schedule," Thompson says. "It's provided a single solution through which to execute and manage our disparate collection of scripts."

The addition of ActiveBatch has also allowed Thompson's team to move beyond the need for scripting. Many of the job steps that comprise these FTP workflows involve data encryption/decryption. To build these steps, Thompson's team has made heavy use of the production-ready Job Steps that are part of the Integrated Jobs Library, allowing the team to drag-and-drop OpenPGP encryption/decryption steps into workflows without the need for scripting.

For data recovery and backup, RelayHealth has leveraged ActiveBatch's Non-Cluster Failover for its primary datacenter in the Southeast U.S. and for the backup on the West Coast. "If we had a failure at our primary datacenter, ActiveBatch would pick up and start executing from our backup datacenter with no interruption to service. That was important when considering different vendors," Thompson says.

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Centralized Management for Compliance and Control

The ability to ensure that unauthorized changes aren't made to production workflows that automate the movement of patient information is critical to comply with healthcare regulations. For RelayHealth, ActiveBatch's permission-based security framework is the catalyst that ensures those regulations are met.

ActiveBatch utilizes a full audit and security framework that limits the risk of unauthorized changes to any ActiveBatch Object. Changes to an ActiveBatch Job, Plan or Variable require managerial approval. "We have a master list that the Director of Data Operations and I have access to," Thompson says. "If any user attempts to change a variable, modify the frequency of a job executing, a plan variable, etc., we are notified of the change via the ActiveBatch alert mechanisms and have to approve it."

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In this regard, ActiveBatch's monitoring and alerting has proven invaluable in keeping IT operations and clients abreast of any failures. "The functionality is so good that we've extended those alerts, such as an email alert, to customers and clients so they're fully aware," Thompson says. "It's mission-critical for the sort of failures that could affect SLA agreements we have with clients. We want to make sure everybody in the world is woken up when an SLA item is hit."

Thanks to ActiveBatch, that is now a rare occurrence. RelayHealth executes over 3 million jobs a month within ActiveBatch with a 99% success rate, a 10% improvement over RelayHealth's previous scheduling tools. This improvement, combined with reduced workload management, has meant that the IT organization has continued to expand their process automation initiatives without the need to hire additional personnel. "If we were still relying on scripting and manual automation of these processes, we would have had to expand our team. ActiveBatch has allowed us to do more with the same without the need of hiring an additional developer or architect," Thompson says.

Nor does Thompson see the expansion of ActiveBatch slowing anytime soon. "As we identify additional process types that can be fit under the ActiveBatch umbrella, we'll continue to grow and streamline our IT organization with ActiveBatch."

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