Automic Drives IT Schedule for Orange County Transportation Authority

Located in Orange, California, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is a multi-modal transportation agency providing countywide bus, paratransit, and Metrolink commuter-rail service. One of the largest transportation providers in the country, OCTA also operates the 91 Express Lanes toll facility, manages freeway, street and road improvement projects, and motorist aid services, and regulates taxi operations.

To handle its unique bus transportation operational needs, OCTA developed an in-house COBOL based application called ACORS (Automated Coach Operator Reporting System) built on an HP-UX server. ACORS manages coach operator check-in and check-outs and generates driver time records that link to payroll as well as handling operator shift bidding. Back-end processing needed to generate hundreds of daily reports, is embedded into ACORS with API calls being used to submit jobs, check status, and distribute output. The OCTA base management relies on ACORS for alerts to any processing issues.

Batch processing problems affecting key deadlines

OCTA had upgraded ACORS to an Oracle database, replacing the original ISAM file systems. The existing job scheduler was becoming less reliable and vendor support was getting worse. Problems included jobs failing to start, errors going unnoticed, and reports getting lost.

These issues were putting OCTA at risk of missing a key business critical deadline. A "final board" detailing the following day's work

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BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Enhance batch performance to meet SLAs
- Modernize legacy job scheduler
- Replace embedded application interfaces
- Avoid end user retraining

AUTOMIC SOLUTION
- Extensive API library
- Robust and scalable scheduling platform
- Automatic error checks and notifications
- Output scanning and distribution
- Global Services Organization

CUSTOMER BENEFITS
- Operational throughput matches business goals
- Greater flexibility planning bus timetables
- Increased end user productivity
- Reduced system administration overheads

schedule must be posted each day by 4 pm. Failure to do so can result in penalty payments to the union representing OCTA's 1200 coach operators.

"Allocating resources to our bus routes each day is a complex task for our base management team," said Ray Riggins, Manager of Business Intelligence and Applications Support at OCTA. "They need to constantly reconfigure workload plans to match available coach operator resources with our published timetables. This needs to be completed before they can run the final board program. The phones start ringing if we miss this deadline and there are penalty payments to the unions that we become liable for."

OCTA sought an automation solution that would resolve their scheduling problems but which wouldn't adversely impact ACORS or require end user retraining. "Our old scheduler had a mind of its own," said Riggins. "We needed a scheduler that was very stable and very robust. We wanted a tool that would manage high volume processing and help us deal with exceptions by bringing them to our attention. Our challenges were that we didn't want to impact our outfacing user group, we didn't want to write application code and we didn't want to change our API's."
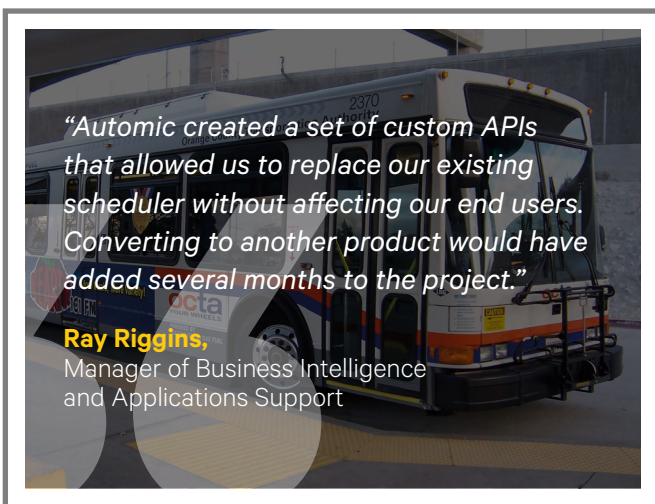
Automic provides integrated, seamless solution

After extensive research, OCTA determined that Automic had the best solution to meet their needs. The OCTA application development team and Automic worked together to build a set of APIs to connect ACORS to the Automic solution.

"We had several meetings with the Automic team. Each time they would come out and ask questions about our application. Then they went into a huddle, came back with more people and asked more questions. It wasn't long before they had a proof-of-concept running as a simulation in the OCTA environment," said Riggins.

Automic is now automating all of OCTA's workload processing. It is also being used to enhance exception handling as well as automating end-user report distribution. Header information embedded in output files is automatically extracted by Automic to determine routing details. Reports are immediately dispatched to end users enabling more responsive and productive decision making.

OCTA has seamlessly modernized its job scheduler through Automic. The back end implementation of Automic has been invisible to OCTA base management staff who continue to submit and manage jobs using the same intuitive ACORS interface.

OCTA Benefits

As a result of the Automic implementation, OCTA now has consistent and responsive batch processing. Automic ensures that the many processes that need to run are completed, ensuring that the "final board" is posted on time.

Automic Workload Automation Suite is now an integral component of OCTA operations tightly embedded in ACORS. "Automic created a set of custom APIs that allowed us to replace our existing scheduler without affecting our end users," said Riggins. "Converting to another product would have added several months to the project. We needed something that was very stable and very robust - with Automic we are getting these things. We are also getting a solution that has been fully integrated with our business systems. We are all very impressed with the level of response and support we have received from Automic."

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For more information or product demonstration please visit www.automic.com