

Redwood Business Solutions

Making complex processes easy to manage.

At A Glance

Industry

- Distribution

Environment

- IBM RS/6000, Windows, IBM AIX
- Oracle Financials
- IBM Tivoli Enterprise Console©
- VERITAS NetBackup
- Oracle back-end databases for virtually all applications

Key Challenges

- Ensure that book stores had the most up-to-date book catalogues for reference
- Ensure that the warehouse operates efficiently and that orders are fulfilled in a timely manner

The Solution

- Management and control of approx. 30,000 jobs in a typical day with Cronacle
- Seamless integration with PL/SQL making the solution easy to customize
- Timely processing of all orders from order placement to order shipping

Key Benefits

- Efficient operation of the warehouse, ensuring that order fulfillment is achieved within tight timeframes
- More efficient overnight batch processes



Efficient order processing made easy for Centraal Boekhuis with Cronacle

With an increasingly complex logistical operation, Centraal Boekhuis realized that it needed an effective solution to help with its ongoing mission of internal automation. In Cronacle, it found a solution that could help automate its entire application suite.



Centraal Boekhuis acts as the linchpin between worldwide publishers and Dutch bookstores. With over 34 million books (71,000 current titles) in stock, the leading book distributor faces major logistical challenges packing and distributing more than 200,000 books per day to approximately 1600 bookshops in the Netherlands. In addition to managing the shipment of books, Centraal Boekhuis also acts as payment facilitator between the publishing houses and the bookstores.

Centraal Boekhuis prides itself in offering clients the best possible service and Information Technology plays an integral role in enabling the company to be highly responsive in fulfilling client orders. To support its exceptional business processing requirements, Centraal Boekhuis has developed numerous internal applications to manage the movement of stock within its warehouses, as well as invoicing and accounting systems.

Toon Koppelaars, IT Manager at Centraal Boekhuis explains the IT set up: "Due to the unusual way we do things at Centraal

Boekhuis, we decided to develop our own rather sophisticated Order Management System and Logistical Management System for each of the 10 warehouses that hold our stock. Running a separate logistical application for each warehouse makes the management of each warehouse a lot easier. In addition to our own homegrown applications, we also run Oracle Financials. You could say that we have crafted our very own ERP application into which Redwood Software plays an enormous role."

A completely automated order processing system

It didn't take Centraal Boekhuis long to realize that significant efficiencies could be achieved by automating the

"We chose Cronacle because of its robustness and the ease with which we could integrate it with our own applications."

Toon Koppelaars
IT Manager, Centraal Boekhuis



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interactions between steps in each processing cycle. Every bookstore that Centraal Boekhuis supplies runs a PC-based customer application called CB-Link, from which they place their daily orders. The application also includes extensive catalogue information on books that can be ordered. The order information from these locally hosted systems is transferred back to the Order Management System via a modem link between the hours of 5-7pm. Cronacle controls the uploading of the order files and prepares the files for loading in to the Order Management System.

In addition to this daily upload of orders, Cronacle is also responsible for ensuring that incremental changes to the book catalogues are communicated to the CBLink applications in each store on a daily basis. The catalogues contain information such as books available, prices, ISBN details, etc.

Koppelaars comments: "Cronacle plays a business-critical role in our entire order processing system. At night the orders collected from the stores at the end of each day are processed in readiness for packing and shipping the following day. As well as making sure that all the orders have been received, Cronacle is responsible for managing all of the updates and reporting

jobs that need to run. We also use the product to continuously monitor the workload. If an important job fails, Cronacle is able to automatically recover and begin processing from where the failure occurred."

Cronacle is used in a near real-time basis to ensure that the jobs required to generate packing slips, invoices and dispatch notes run within a few seconds. Failure to complete these tasks can result in a complete breakdown in the order fulfillment process. Koppelaars continues: "During the day the Inventory Picking System on the warehouse floor displays the orders that need to be retrieved for packing by the warehouse staff. Once the books are picked, the necessary documents, such as address labels, stickers and invoices are printed. Cronacle controls of all of this workload, and due to the rigid timeframes involved in completing all the order processing, it plays a very crucial role in the distribution of over 200,000 books a day. Without Cronacle we wouldn't be able to operate our warehouse in the efficient way we currently do."

Bottom line - a great working relationship and improved service to customers. The working relationship between Centraal Boekhuis and Redwood began in 1994, when Cronacle was first implemented. Koppelaars says: "We expect a lot from the few IT suppliers that we do use and Redwood Software has always been great in the service and products that it offers." Cronacle is now very much a strategic part of the Centraal Boekhuis IT Department and controls up to 30,000 jobs a day. In addition to the process automation and job scheduling tasks carried out by Cronacle, the solution also plays a major part in the day-to-day automation of the IT department. For example, Cronacle is used to monitor whether back-ups within VERITAS NetBackup have completed. If a backup has failed, Cronacle's integration with IBM Tivoli, allows an alert to be sent to the IBM Tivoli Enterprise Console®.

Although Centraal Boekhuis has no formal Service Level Agreement with the bookstores that it has relationships with, it does guarantee clients delivery within 48 hours. Koppelaars highlights that Cronacle plays a major part in the service offered: "Cronacle is the most business-critical component in ensuring that orders are met and delivered to our customers within the time promised. Without Cronacle, our customers would not receive their books on time and we could lose out to competition should our level of service drop."

"There are approximately 300 staff located in all of our warehouses. We rely on Cronacle to drive the way these people work. With a less efficient solution or a production failure we would very quickly find ourselves in a situation where these people were sitting around drinking coffee. This gives you an idea of the benefit that Centraal Boekhuis realizes by running Cronacle, which has proven itself to be extremely reliable."

Exciting future developments

A new online Order Management System is to be introduced at the end of the year called CB-Online. This system will give all the bookstores Internet access to the ordering system and means that orders can be received and processed throughout the entire working day and not just in batch overnight. Toon Koppelaars concludes: "To fully benefit from our online ordering system, jobs will run every half hour to process the orders within the Order Management System. With the help of Cronacle managing the processing of all online orders, we will be able to complete and fulfill orders a lot quicker and offer a much improved service to our customers. So as you can see, Cronacle will continue helping us meet our goals well in to the future."



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