

Redwood Business Solutions

Making complex processes easy to manage.

At A Glance

Industry

- Retail

Environment

- Linux
- Windows XP
- Oracle and Progress database

Key Challenges

- Ensure business continuity
- Support for and integration with new Linux environment

The Solution

- Cronacle Event-Driven Job Scheduling
- Central point for process administration and management

Key Benefits

- Reduction of the total batch window
- Man hours saved on hard coding batch jobs
- Drastic reduction of IT operational costs



Etos B.V. and Cronacle - Together getting the most out of Linux

Etos B.V. a subsidiary of the Ahold group has grown to become one of the largest health and cosmetic product retailers in Europe. With 430 (55% franchised) stores in the Netherlands alone and growing penetration in other EU markets, the retailer has hit on a winning formula; providing exclusive outlets for a large number of “own brand” and third party products.



Retailers need the most from their IT

The number of outlets coupled with the vast array of products on offer is part of the methodology making Etos the success it is today. As with many retailing environments the efficient execution of logistics, planning, delivery, replenishment, pricing and management of point-of-sale data can all contribute to a company's ultimate success or failure. Particularly in retail; hardware, ERP and other business critical software applications need to be running at optimum levels, not only to deliver full ROI but to ensure business continuity and adaptability as consumer tastes, trends and personal economics change. Retailers must innovate and manipulate IT to meet business requirements by getting the right products, on the right shelves, at the right time. Even considering its position as market leader Etos is no different.

Etos, with such a cutting-edge approach to retail production and marketing, believed it could apply a similar formula to other

areas of the business by adapting its IT systems to better match current and future objectives. With this in mind the company moved from AIX operating systems to a Linux environment in the early part of 2004. This generated massive savings in IT related infrastructure costs and had no immediate consequences in-terms of connecting to Oracle and Progress databases. However, there was one drawback; the existing job scheduling and batch processing solution provided to Etos under the umbrella of IT systems support from Ahold did not integrate into the Linux

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Louis Klos
Linux Specialist, Etos B.V.



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environment. Hence, it could not scale and adapt in-line with the evolving business decisions being made within Etos. Therefore the decision to find an alternative process automation solution that could run on Linux was taken.

Why Cronacle?

Etos selected the Cronacle solution from Redwood Software to replace the process automation tool provided to it via the Ahold Headquarters. Shortly after moving all 430 stores to Linux and configuring Cronacle as the central point of control for process administration and management Etos Linux specialist Louis Klos began to see some immediate benefits. He mentions, "With Cronacle we can leverage the full speed of the Linux environment. Previously we would have to run 4 batch jobs, synchronously, per day, per store for the handling of price changes through to backups. However, with our Linux systems empowered by Cronacle, we can now run asynchronous event-driven batch jobs that overlap each other. This significantly reducing the total batch window."

Klos continues, "Additionally as jobs are triggered in real-time we can now replenish product levels and report financial data to the headquarters much quicker than ever before. In fact we can often replenish a product at a particular store quicker than it takes the headquarters to access and recognize data regarding that sale." Enabled with Cronacle, Etos can now develop end-to-end event-driven process chains from the trigger at point of sale (POS) all the way through to publishing close-to-real-time sales data via the electronic data interchange.

Adding new stores

Cronacle has also saved Etos a significant number of man hours in relation to the hard coding of new batch jobs for additional stores. With the previous scheduler each additional store had to have new scripts developed for each process or job, as well as different parameters defined for those processes.

With Cronacle it is possible to add extra parameters (i.e. new store number or code) to the existing job portfolio, which requires much less effort. Moreover with the power and speed of Linux it became possible to tailor jobs to particular stores rather than remain running generic types of batch process across the board to safe guard systems capacity. This has facilitated differentiation between the stores (within corporate boundaries or guidelines) as franchisees can rely on the equally fast replenishment of products not widely sold across every store.

The move by Etos to the Linux environment has resulted in IT operational costs being reduced by over 50%. Further, the corporate cost contribution to HQ for scheduling support has also been removed. Together these savings have more than offset any Cronacle related costs. But using Cronacle as the automation engine at Etos has delivered further benefits. Klos describes, "By mapping schedules to the new Cronacle environment we were able to better understand the processes we had in place. It forced us to consider inter-relationships between processes and therefore remove redundant components." Klos continues, "Additionally load balancing and error checking related tasks are easier to execute through Cronacle as the intuitive interface clearly identifies job results and system load data. With the previous scheduler incomplete jobs would hang, slowing down error detection and reactive escalation procedures such as spreading load between less busy resources".

Future-proofing your IT

In selecting Cronacle, Etos has future-proofed its networked IT infrastructure. Stores can initiate replenishment themselves through

file events and they can report sales transaction data in real-time, enabled not only through streamlined POS technologies but also by leveraging an automation solution that integrates back-end technologies such as Progress and Oracle. Indeed, as Etos like many retailers looks to fully integrate RFID technologies into its core business, the company can be assured that Cronacle can scale both in terms of size and platform coverage.

As the number of stores continues to grow both domestically and abroad the company can be confident that Cronacle will scale significantly to meet future automation requirements. Currently running at 3,000 jobs per day, the company expects this number to increase significantly in the near future. Another factor in selecting Cronacle was the personalized support and one-to-one consulting provided by Redwood Software.

Innovative rewards

Now running a fully optimized network of stores, inter-connected through web services and running Cronacle with Linux, Etos is reaping the rewards from its strategic decision to deploy Linux company-wide. Etos' IT independence has directly contributed to its business success, thus helping to define it as the leading health and beauty retail organization within the Netherlands.

