

Redwood Business Solutions

Making complex processes easy to manage.

At A Glance

Industry

- Customer Intelligence Software Solutions

Environment

- Sybase IQ – Data Warehouses
- Ab Initio ETL based customer Solutions
- AIX, Linux, Windows, Tru64
- EIM Elements solution

Key Challenges

- Reducing errors associated with restrictive scheduling tools
- Improving flexibility in process automation
- Maintaining strict customer service levels

The Solution

- Cronacle event-driven process automation
- Centralized management of client customer intelligence workload
- Re-usable templates for automation solutions

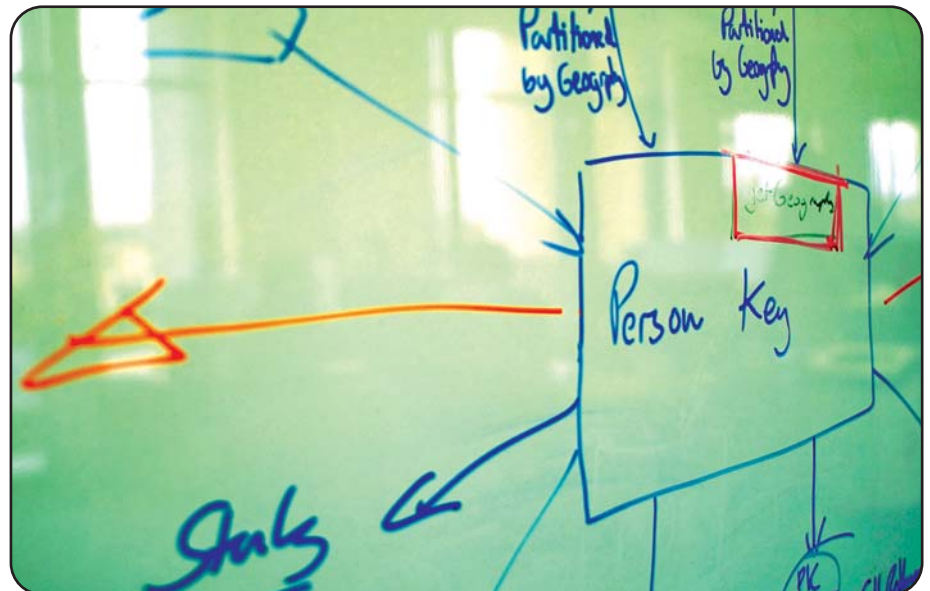
Key Benefits

- Improved customer service levels through more efficient and reliable automation
- Reduced time for solution development
- Increased operational efficiency



Experian Integrated Marketing increases customer service levels and reduces development time with Cronacle

Effective use of customer intelligence is critical for the success of Blue Chip organizations. Experian Integrated Marketing implemented Cronacle to help ensure that the customer intelligence solutions it provides have the reliability, scalability and high levels of workload throughput demanded by its clients.



Experian Integrated Marketing (EIM), part of the Experian Group, designs, builds and operates high performance customer intelligence and analysis solutions. EIM, whose customers include leading blue chip organizations from broadcasting, financial services and telecommunications, delivers solutions that enable their clients to predict and influence the behavior of customers through analysis of data collected from a wide range of sources.

From its two data centers located in Luton and Bristol in the UK, EIM's 200 employees are involved in building and hosting the data-marts that their clients use to achieve growth and competitive edge. Increasing demand highlighted the need to improve the efficiency of the hosting operation and deliver more flexibility in the management of client workload. Much of the processing

involves submission of background tasks which was previously dependent on basic operating system scheduling tools, which had no capacity for complex dependency resolution, could not use events to manage workload or dynamically respond to last minute changes.

"The scope we have for growth, the flexibility we now have for using events to trigger workload and the advantages of being able to deploy new solutions quickly, all add to the benefits our business has gained from moving our workload automation up to the level provided by Cronacle."

Mike Potts
Director of Technical Services,
EIM

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In addition to the operational issues, the business also had to adhere to 99.9% availability service levels whilst striving to keep management costs down and maintain the existing headcount.

Selecting Flexibility

Mike Potts, Director of Technical Services at EIM, describes the situation: "Our customers expect the services we provide to deliver accurate information tailored to their specific needs. They rely on this data for their success. We need to build these environments for them as quickly as possible and, once implemented, they want to see results right away." To address the combined operational and business requirements, EIM needed a process automation solution that could be used in place of the Linux Cron utility, which would deliver the scalability and performance required by customers and which had the ability to deliver event driven process automation to enable a clean break from restrictive time and date based processing. The solution also had to be able to integrate with the various tools that EIM uses to develop its solutions: Ab Initio, Sybase and the in-house developed 'Elements' Software.

The selection process involved four vendors, with the successful solution being Cronacle from Redwood Software.

ELEMENTS

Mike Potts continues: "Our number one technical requirement was an event-driven solution that could handle complex scheduling requirements and that would enable us to exploit the Oracle skills we had in-house. Cronacle met all the criteria but, perhaps as important, was the relationship we built up with Redwood Software, who were very focused on ensuring that our needs were met." In addition, Cronacle met the business needs for improved efficiency and lowering management overheads.

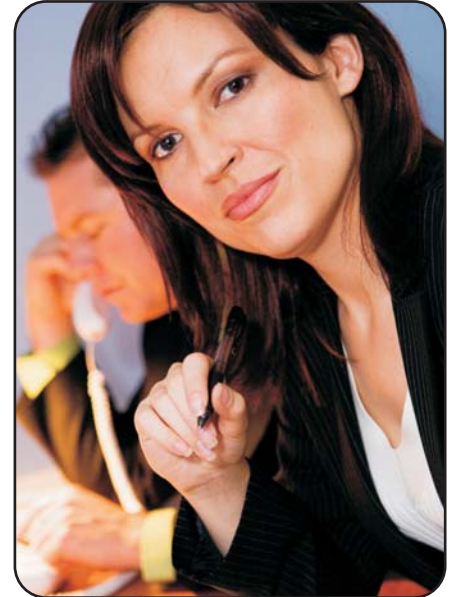
An Improved Method of Operation

Cronacle manages the workload for the hosted customer intelligence solutions that EIM operates. The initial daily throughput of some 1200 jobs is expected to rise considerably as the number of incoming file transfers that are used to trigger processing increases. The unpredictable nature of the workload makes the most of the dynamic approach that Cronacle uses for automating tasks. Alan Price, Operations Analyst at EIM, explains: "We are able to generate job streams on-the-fly, applying customer specific parameters to pre-existing job definitions. Not only does this enable us to respond in real-time to customer workload demands, we also have the benefit of re-using a lot of code. By doing this, we have reduced the number of job chains from several hundred to about 40, achieving significant reductions in administrative overhead and improving reliability as a result."

Cronacle is now integral to the EIM operation. Any exceptions resulting from failed jobs are notified immediately to the NimBUS alerting and monitoring console that is used for high level systems management, meaning that during day to day operations, the process automation provided by Cronacle looks after itself. High availability is implemented via standard Microsoft clustering – imposing no proprietary demands on the environment.

Improved Service and Reduced Development Time

EIM implemented an initial environment with 25 servers under Cronacle workload management, a number set to grow with every new customer installation. The principles adopted for managing the background processes for one new customer can be re-used for the next. Mike Potts comments: "One of the major benefits of using Cronacle is the reduction in the time it takes for us to develop the specific solutions for our



customers. By using a number of standard templates and associated rules, it is very easy for us to build outwards from core functionality." In addition the centralized automation has improved service levels by reducing the amount of manual intervention and increased visibility of what is happening at any stage of processing. The same single point of control allows exception notification to be easily integrated with NimBUS and SMS messages are automatically sent to on-call staff, providing a high level of proactive support for customers.

Mike Potts concludes: "Selecting Cronacle to control all background processing for our hosted solutions has proved to be the right choice for EIM and our customers. The scope we have for growth, the flexibility we now have for using events to trigger workload and the advantages of being able to deploy new solutions quickly all add to the benefits our business has gained from moving our workload automation up to the level provided by Cronacle."