

Is your Workload Automation Broker an overlooked gold mine of BSM data?

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Introduction

A primary objective of Business Service Management is to give business stakeholders a window into how closely an enterprises application infrastructure and underlying data processing is mapped to the contracted service levels for a business service.

Much of what goes on in the enterprise these days is automated, and a high percentage of that information will be found within your Workload Automation environment. A modern workload automation broker is able to effectively manage real-time/near real-time workload as well as batch.

Nowadays, the Workload Automation Broker can do a lot more than just launch scheduled batch jobs. While often dismissed as simply another IT management tool, Workload Automation Brokers in fact drive over 70% of all business processes today, which are performed in batch.** It can identify and monitor the interdependencies of data and processes between the systems, applications, and business processes that comprise a business service - giving you an unprecedented view into your enterprise.

While there is certainly a goldmine of information that your scheduler can provide you about your environment, significant advancements in workload automation are being introduced by new and existing vendors that may soon make you question how your existing solution is a barrier to or an enabler of you achieving compliance of business service levels.

Technology Background

Since the 1970's, Enterprise Job Schedulers have automated and managed increasingly complex data centers. Starting out on mainframes, they evolved into distributed systems and are now moving into the cloud.

In the past decade, these tools have evolved far beyond batch with added integrations to SOA, ERP systems, and other packaged applications to become workflow-centric, event-driven tools with significant SLA management capabilities The Job Schedulers became Workload Automation Brokers.

The emergence of virtual systems and cloud computing has created an explosion in the number of computing resources requiring management and has created another level of complexity in the enterprise. The role of automation in enabling business services to meet service levels has never been greater.

Today's Workload Automation Brokers continues to expand it's already significant role in the management of online workload as they are increasingly utilized to manage processes relying on technologies such as parallel processing, ETL, and GRID computing; and they are creating complex workflows that span operating systems, data sources, applications, and even physical data centers. This enables IT Operations Managers to present to the business a means of mapping IT resources to business processes.

Workload Automation's future as a protector of Service Levels

How can Workload Automation solutions be advanced to improve the overall performance of business services? What should you be looking for from your workload automation vendor?

In terms of BSM, here is a list of five things to expect out of Workload Automation today and in the near-term to enable you to achieve your automation and BSM goals. If this isn't offered by, or on your provider's near-term roadmap, it should raise some eyebrows.

1. Predictive Analytics

Solutions need to move beyond simple SLA Management or single workflow critical path analysis and into true Deadline Scheduling. Predictive analysis enables enterprises to visualize all interdependent tasks and analyze real-time results on the fly against historical records.

By doing so, the enterprise can identify key business processes and create a backward chain of events to identify processing bottlenecks.

2. Proactive Resource Optimization

Working in conjunction with Predictive Analytics, solutions need to automatically release bottlenecks using information about resources, business priorities, dependencies, and deadlines that prevent the completion of key business processes and create policies for reallocating enterprise resources to meet the necessary time windows to remain with service level.

The more portable and transparent workload is, the more it is able to fully leverage the different kinds of resource optimization opportunities that may be present in your enterprise.

Resource optimization may take many shapes:

- Prioritizing workload on a server, including delaying or cancelling less critical workload
- Allocating more physical resources such as CPU, Memory, or DB connections
- Provisioning new virtual servers from a pool of VM machines or in public and private clouds
- Re-engineering applications, especially data intensive applications, to take advantage of load balancing and GRID technologies.

3. Reviewing and Refining Job Definitions

The old adage, "if it isn't broke, don't fix it" is a smart policy in most situation. In Workload Automation, it could end up costing you a bundle. Your old job definitions probably reflect hardware and software limitations that have long since been lifted. If you take a look, you'll likely discover that many processes that once had to run sequentially can now run in parallel.

It is important to challenge the assumptions as to why your workload is configured and defined the way it is, and to eliminate processing bottlenecks caused by obsolete limitations.

4. Visualization

As important as it is to have a corporate-wide BSM dashboard, and valuable that the workload automation solution to provide meaningful data for that system, it is also important that within the Workload Automation solution that there is a business-centric view mapping to the status of each business service as a stand-alone entity as well as in relation to one another.

5. Reporting & Auditing

More critical than reporting on failures in the workload that could jeopardize meeting performance targets is getting to the heart of why workload fails to meet their service levels.

It's critical that from a central management point that you can identify failures and trends. You also need a comprehensive audit trail that can identify problems caused by human error and improper changes.

Conclusion

Your legacy job scheduling and modern workload automation solutions can provide you a rich set of relevant data as to the status of your mission-critical workload and how it maps to the business.

Leveraging this capability is a combination of understanding how your business services are mapped within your workload automation solution, leveraging a modern workload solution that will enable you to more effectively manage your service levels, and an intelligent review and challenge of the assumptions relating to how your workload has been historically scheduled and configured.

***Magic Quadrant for Job Scheduling, 2009 by Gartner Group*

Ihr Partner:



INTERCHIP AG
Elektrastrasse 6
D-81925 München
Telefon +49 - 89 - 99 14 99 0
Email: info@interchip.de
<http://www.interchip.de>