

## Case Study

### **Northumbrian Water dilutes impact of heavy batch processing load by using OSM's COSbatch**

**Northumbrian Water** and Essex & Suffolk Water form both parts of the company Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) - the largest independent water company in the United Kingdom.

The water and sewerage company invests millions of pounds every year on improvements to the service they provide to their customers and on environmental improvements.

NWL provides water and waste water services to 2.6 million customers in the North East of England and water services to 1.7 million customers in the South East of England. Their customer information system is at the heart of their customer service and billing operations, and enables the company to provide a responsive and efficient service through its 2,000 plus employees.

When NWL decided to replace their mainframe-based customer information system with a client/server-based system they realised that they would need quality systems management tools to ensure smooth-running. This need coincided with the beginnings of a drive for datacentre efficiencies, through seeking to define and implement process and procedure-based policies. As part of the solution they set out to look for systems management tools, including a batch job scheduler.

Malcolm Beckwith, IT Data Centre Manager at NWL, said: *"Our initial investigations were focused on finding tools that matched and exceeded our mainframe functionality."*

NWL chose OSM's *COSbatch* production management software.

The NWL datacentre now consists of nine large IBM eServer pSeries servers, approximately 35 smaller IBM AIX servers, and an even larger number of Windows NT systems. These large eServers replace a previous investment in IBM SP systems. They run the Oracle RDBMS, and the company's main applications for customer billing (ICIS), Oracle Financials, asset management and data warehousing. The company has a major investment in GIS systems, and has moved to thin client and Citrix servers in many areas. The department provides high availability wherever possible, using HACMP in the datacentre, and failover hardware and systems software on their Windows and Citrix systems. The company also uses an off-site facility for disaster recovery. The reliability of their systems is paramount and the systems management software has to live up to that, providing a robust environment.

In the pursuit of efficiencies one of the biggest changes for the staff was the move from a 7 x 24 hour operation to a more restricted working day. Staff currently attend site from 07:30 to 18:00 hours, five days per week, with a team member nominated for standby support outside of these hours. The move to a "lights out" operation necessitated a reliable scheduler that could be linked, seamlessly, into its backup software. Some 400 batch jobs are now run every night and *COSbatch* is relied upon to ensure they are completed by start of work next day.

To help ensure the integrity of the production environment NWL have also licensed BMC Software's PATROL application monitoring software from OSM, together with the *COSbatch* KM for PATROL which propagates any alarms generated by *COSbatch* up into the PATROL desktop.

Following the successful implementation of *COSbatch*, and its *COSduty* subsystem, NWL's datacentre can now be managed and run by less people – enabling the rest of the workforce to carry out new roles.

NWL had chosen *COSbatch* for their production management but quickly realized that they could use the *COSduty* functionality built within *COSbatch*, for both systems management and to help them manage their mainframe during the migration period. Instead of producing a printed list of tasks for operators, they used the *COSduty* duty scheduler, which is embedded in *COSbatch*, to set up a 'run list' so that operators were automatically prompted to perform regular tasks. This meant that tasks were performed efficiently and management were provided with an automatic audit log of completed and outstanding tasks.

NWL use *COSduty* to delegate complex, operational routines to their business users. Management at NWL are resolute about defining the policies and procedures that need to be carried out for effective systems management and, in *COSduty*, they found a perfect vehicle for rolling out these procedures to business users in a controlled manner.

NWL currently have some 300 encapsulated duties driven from *COSduty*. Each duty is a single, complex routine, encapsulated within a simple menu/forms front-end that allows a non-technically literate individual to carry it out in a structured and controlled manner. As an example the cashier department in each subsidiary now selects its own reports for printing from available lists (which are then passed to OSM's *COSprint* product for delivery); transfers remittance files from UNISYS systems to the UNIX datacentre; and transfers financial information around the network, all without an understanding of the underlying infrastructure or operating systems.

Malcolm Beckwith, IT Data Centre Manager, Northumbrian Water said: *"By devolving routines to the originating user departments, we give them a faster service while removing workload from the datacentre management team."*

The ease of use of the *COSbatch* and *COSduty* front-end is particularly useful. Temporary staff have to be occasionally employed to perform routine work. These staff

members can be made productive within hours as the complexity of the technology is abstracted from them by the intuitive interface, and is backed up by policies that are well defined in the documented procedures.

For instance, the customer information system, ICIS, produces an enormous number of documents and requires many operational tasks to be run. Once ICIS had been installed, it became apparent that the menu manager function within *COSduty* would allow all those operational tasks to be managed through a straightforward menu system. This simplified the use of the system and meant that user support could be passed to the PC Help Desk team.

### **About Open Systems Management**

Open Systems Management (OSM) - a privately held company with venture capital backing, founded in 1988 and based out of Wokingham, UK; Seattle, WA, USA; and Perth in Western Australia - develops and markets low cost, high quality systems and IT operations management software for UNIX, Linux and Microsoft Windows systems. The software is supported worldwide out of offices in Perth, the UK and Seattle, WA, USA.

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