



halcyon software

solution overview

Bras N Things

Recognised as the leading lingerie retailer in Australia and New Zealand, Bras N Things (BNT) operates 166 stores across both countries.

Challenges

- Monitor every aspect of AS/400 operations and broadcast alerts in case of systems error
- Ensure overnight data downloads from each store occur without error
- Reduce AS/400 systems administrator workloads

Solution

Following hands-on demonstrations and positive customer references, BNT implemented Halcyon Systems Operations Suite on its AS/400 for systems monitoring and management.

Benefits

- Almost immediate cessation of business disruptions caused by AS/400-related issues
- Systems administration time savings of at least four hours every day
- The ability to resolve AS/400 systems issues remotely, using only a mobile phone

In the lingerie retail industry, there's arguably no name more recognisable than Bras N Things (BNT). With 166 stores throughout Australia and New Zealand, the company is a major success story. Yet it is success that has been built on providing customers with nothing short of the best possible lingerie retail experience; and underpinning that is a high performance IT infrastructure supported by Halcyon Software's Systems Operations Suite.

Challenge

When BNT's IT Manager, Leigh Shaba, started with the company in 2007, one of the main challenges he was confronted with was ensuring full integration between the company's newly implemented AS/400-based JDA ERP and Micros Point-of-Sale (POS) systems. A crucial component of that integration was to be a systems monitoring and notification solution for the AS/400, which could reduce systems administrator workloads and, most importantly, monitor every aspect of the server then broadcast alerts in case of systems error.

"If data from each of the stores isn't downloaded automatically at the close of business, or there is a glitch in the overnight batch processing on the AS/400, it can have an enormous domino effect on the company," Leigh explains. "If the ERP system isn't able to process a day's sales, then replenishment orders for the warehouse don't get prepared. This in turn can result in 60 warehouse personnel being unable to do the day's picking, and stores potentially running short of stock."

Solution

Regardless of having used Halcyon Software technologies prior to joining BNT, Leigh invited two other systems monitoring vendors along with Halcyon to propose a solution. Aside from an on-site demonstration, Leigh insisted on being provided with several reference sites from each of the vendors. "The Halcyon sites were the only ones that didn't complain about vendor support," he says. "And they were also those sites that were most enthusiastic about their systems monitoring solution."

"What stood out particularly, though, was that Halcyon's Systems Operations Suite was the only one of the three that delivered really versatile alerting and the ability to send commands to the AS/400 via SMS," Leigh continues. "Then, aside from being vastly better technology, it beat the others hands down when it came to price."

Keeping business notified

With the Halcyon solution implemented, personnel trained and the completion of a comprehensive list of alert definitions, business disruptions caused by AS/400-related issues ceased almost immediately. Contributing to that is alert escalation – a feature Leigh regards as being crucial to effective systems management.

"When the system sends an alert about an issue that needs resolution, such as a disk failure or job unable to be run, it essentially won't rest until there is a resolution," Leigh explains. "If an issue isn't addressed within five minutes of initial notification being sent, another alert is sent, then yet again five minutes later if there's no response. Failing that, the alert is escalated and I receive the notification."

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Halcyon Software Limited is an established software company with over 20 years experience in systems management. Halcyon writes software for IBM midrange computers as well as Windows, Linux, Unix, AIX and Netware platforms. Large multinational companies, corporate data centres, as well as small to medium-sized businesses use Halcyon Software products to proactively manage and automate their IT operations.

The head office is located in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, and the company's software is used throughout the world with distributors in Europe, Australia and the USA.

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Of particular benefit to the BNT team is that the Halcyon Message Communicator component of the solution enables AS/400 system commands to be sent and acted upon by SMS. "Anything that doesn't require physical intervention can be done with little more than a mobile phone," Leigh says. "This gives us the ability to resolve issues without needing to be on site, and well before they can have any impact on the business."

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*Leigh Shaba
IT Manager
Bras N Things*

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Halcyon alerts and notifications are not restricted to the IT department. In fact, Leigh has configured the system to send e-mail notifications to various business units when specific jobs on the AS/400 have been completed. An example of this is the BNT buying team's extensive reliance upon a third-party business intelligence application. "It's essential for the team that their buying decisions and strategies are based on the most current data," Leigh explains. "Now, as soon as the application has finished processing the previous day's transactions, the Halcyon system automatically notifies them by e-mail."

Massive time-savings

When it comes to gaining time-savings from the Halcyon Software solution, Leigh states that four hours per day is a conservative estimate. Where administrators used to spend around two hours every morning and every afternoon checking message queues and history logs, they now devote that time to providing support to the company's user community.

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The vendor support aspect

Bearing out precisely what he had been told by other Halcyon Software customers, Leigh and his team have discovered that Halcyon support is more than just a cut above the rest. "Every time we've contacted Halcyon, the response has been almost immediate," Leigh states. "That's precisely the level of support we need in order that we can provide it in kind to the business."

"Would I recommend Halcyon Software to other large AS/400 sites? Definitely!"