APOS Insight, APOS Administrator Case Study

Energy Northwest

Unites States

SOLUTIONS USED: APOS INSIGHT, APOS ADMINISTRATOR

Product Components Used: InfoScheduler, Instance Manager, Object Manager, KPI

BACKGROUND:

Energy Northwest is a Joint Operating Agency made up of 28 member public utilities across the State of Washington. The Agency operates electricity generating stations that provide electricity at cost and provides other specialized services to the energy industry in the area.

CHALLENGE 1: ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Energy Northwest is a long-standing user of the SAP BusinessObjects technologies. Over time, their SAP BusinessObjects deployment has experienced major growth throughout the organization. Along with growth have come additional volume and a more complex environment to administer.

Matt Johnson of Energy Northwest is directly responsible for the administration and management of the SAP BusinessObjects platform explains "Today we manage report content that supports approximately 1,200 users within the organization, which ends up totaling 700 reports, 900 schedules, 800 system objects, and reaches all departments within our organization with our primary users being from administration and human resources."

Regular challenges in their deployment include managing the high volume of report schedules, and controlling failed report schedule executions. System administrators were looking for a way to create these report schedules and respond to instance failures more efficiently.

Along with schedule and instance related challenges, the administrators were spending a lot of time changing system object settings, preference settings and system configuration settings. Still another challenge was the lack of enhanced auditing and validation tools that could provide visibility into various system metrics when broader system problems were encountered.

SOLUTION 1:

In order to effectively address the associated platform management challenges, APOS solutions have been utilized for several years to bring greater efficiency to the regular maintenance of the system. Primary solutions being used are Instance Manager, InfoScheduler, Object Manager and KPI. Matt Johnson continues, "There are ongoing, long term benefits to using these products. We use the Instance Manager every day to help identify failed jobs and re-schedule them. I used it just yesterday to help reschedule jobs out of a timeframe in which we needed to free up load on one of our systems. The use of the InfoScheduler has made moving over any scheduling to significantly re-designed reports easier." Matt continues "Object Manager gets used to update failure notification info, user preferences as we get new employees and other system configuration needs. We have KPI as well, and that gets used regularly to answer tougher audit questions regarding system usage, scheduling, finding specific job info, etc."

CHALLENGE 2: AGILITY DURING MIGRATION

Recently, Energy Northwest's existing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system was being upgraded over a single weekend. The content of hundreds of existing reports had already been updated to utilize the new version of the ERP and to point to the new database. It was critical that the migration of this content be successfully addressed prior to the following Monday so that production processes and information consumer workflows would not be disrupted by reports being unavailable. As a result, responsiveness and agility of the team was key to success.

In the course of the upgrade weekend, the related production schedules had to be changed to use the new report objects. Without the Instance Manager and InfoScheduler technologies, they would have had to

recreate all the schedules manually, burning critical cycles of the high-pressure migration, and opening additional risks of error during manual entry.

Matt Johnson explains that this "…would have involved many people with dual monitors, a critical eye to detail and a great deal of patience required for hours of such a monotonous task."

Mr. Johnson estimates that accomplishing this manually would have required at least 40 hours of expensive, painstaking effort by the two co-administrators and by several system leads involved in other aspects of the upgrade.

SOLUTION 2:

Energy Northwest decided that the APOS InfoScheduler and Instance Manager components would meet this challenge.

Mr. Johnson explains that, "With the Instance Manager, we were able to retrieve all of the scheduling information for the reports. We updated some key pieces of info, such as database logon values. With some Excel formulas we then and most importantly, changed Object IDs to the updated set of reports. Then we imported the new scheduling information with the InfoScheduler. We mass paused all the old recurring jobs and started up the new recurring jobs."

He continues, "The work would have been split up among myself, my co-administrator and some system leads that were already very busy. Instead, it took me and my co-administrator about 3 hours to map over the scheduling to the new version of the reports. I'd say that the estimated time given back to our system leads was about 4 hours each, which over the upgrade weekend was very valuable. Since they weren't involved in this task at all, they could instead focus on system configuration and testing."

WHY APOS?

Mr. Johnson says that "The APOS technical staff was very helpful in identifying how the tools could accomplish our needs, which is why we ended up purchasing the products. After acquiring it, it did not take long to become familiar with the software. We found it easy to use after some trial and error, reading of the help info and getting some pointers from the APOS staff."

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