Furthering Professional Credit and Collection Industry Standards

State Collection Service Up-levels Customer Service and Processing with Cisco Tidal Enterprise Scheduler

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STATE COLLECTION SERVICE
- Credit and Collections
- Madison, Wisconsin USA
- 175 Employees

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Maintain the high professional credit and collection standards for which the company is known
- Automate a spreadsheet and manpower-driven processing environment
- Effectively manage a rapidly-increasing data processing workload

SOLUTION
- Deploy Cisco Tidal Enterprise Scheduler in the company's data processing center
- Integrate job scheduling operations with a Pervasive ETL solution

BUSINESS RESULTS
- Enables more data processing with fewer staff dedicated to that function
- Improves employee productivity through easy-to-use GUI and secure, central point of control
- Increases visibility into and control of operations, while significantly reducing processing errors

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Business Challenge

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, State Collection Service Inc. is privately held and family-owned. The company employs 175 people at offices in Madison, Wisconsin, Woodbury, Minnesota and at Beloit, Wisconsin, which is also a back-up data center.

State Collection Service provides professional credit and collection services to clients in the healthcare, public utility, government, financial services, retail, and telecommunications sectors. The company is recognized for delivering high quality customer service, integrity, and significant recovery results for its clients.

A pioneer in its field, State Collection Service is the third agency to be accredited in the use of the Association of Credit and Collection Professionals International (ACA) Professional Practices Management System (PPMS). State Collection Service also received the Wisconsin Better Business Bureau Business Ethics Torch Award in 2008 and is certified by the International Association of Commercial Collectors (IACC).

The company is well known and respected for the effectiveness of its traditional debt collection activities. In addition, it has an Extended Business Office that offers customized accounts receivable services. This group, which is the fastest-growing division of the business, enables its clients to manage cash collections prior to bad debt write-off. Services range from letter and/or call campaigns, insurance follow-up, pre-collection services, contract payment monitoring, and extra staffing of customer service specialists.

Maintaining Momentum and Quality

The management group at State Collection Service understood that the company had to move beyond sheer manpower to drive the vital processes of its collection management system. Therefore, it decided to standardize on an automated job scheduling system that could help improve the speed and quality of data processes that serve customers. According to CIO Jim Warner, "Growth was a big factor in our decision to look at other solutions, and so was accuracy. What I've learned over the years is that the ability to manage technology and people is critical to an organization's success. State Collection Service embraces technology that supports our high standards of customer service and ultimately our recovery objectives."

Solution

Daily activities at State Collection Service are driven by strict quality assurance standards. Adoption of the ISO 9000-based PPMS program guarantees customers that the company has put effective QA and compliance programs in

place. Because PPMS enables tracking of quality scores, account investigations, and client issues, it has been invaluable in helping management analyze trends and proactively seize opportunities for improvement.

Warner notes that the ability to "securely and systematically interface with clients' business data files" is integral to managing the mass of data involved in account placements, payments, cancelations, and inventory reconciliation. In the first three quarters of 2009, for example, the company placed a staggering 1.5 million new accounts under management.

> "The speed and ease with which we can deploy a new client is remarkable."
> **—Jim Warner, CIO, State Collection Service Name**

Scheduling and Managing Workflow Effectively

Supporting these processing-intensive efforts led the company to consider Enterprise Scheduler to schedule data exchange jobs and troubleshoot potential workflow issues in its two-platform Microsoft and HPUX environment. As Jeff Amundson, e-business director and security administrator, comments, "I've evaluated just about every scheduling solution on the market, and I've worked with Tidal for more than ten years. I'm familiar with and confident in what Tidal's scheduler can do to improve the accuracy and efficiency of many types of business operations."

Jim Warner echoes that confidence. "We specifically chose Tidal Enterprise Scheduler because we knew that it would allow IT to deliver on its promise of making it easier to interface with our customers. Its single point of scheduling control was very important to us, and as CIO, I wanted to be able to 'look under the hood' of our business processes and find improvement opportunities."

Business Results

Enterprise Scheduler is delivering vital business results for State Collection Service. The company has been able to:

- Improve all aspects of customer relationship management
- Reduce costs associated with data processing
- Improve data processing efficiency through reduced errors and efficient, centralized job scheduling and analysis
- Increase proactivity through better visibility into business process performance

The greatest business result of adopting Enterprise Scheduler has been State Collection Service's ability to smooth all aspects of customer relationship management, from bringing clients on board to tracking file interfaces. Not only has this powerful product delivered faster and more reliable data processing and more accurate results, it has also enabled faster customer onboarding. "The speed and ease with which we can deploy a new client is remarkable," says Warner. "What used to take months can now be done in a matter of a few weeks, because we use a standardized template to deploy the data import."

The company has also reduced headcount in its data processing section by 33 percent. And though Warner and Amundson have not yet run the percentages on error reductions, they are seeing considerably fewer issues opened in the company's quality assurance system. With only about 20 percent of operations automated at the time of this writing, they believe the full impact of changes remains to be seen. Warner notes that visibility into operations and his ability to control them has definitely improved—an improvement he attributes to standardization and a single point of control.

The speed of obtaining tangible business results is also directly tied to the scheduler's ease of use. According to the IT staff, one important element of that simplicity is a customizable, graphic interface that makes accessible all the job information required at a glance.

Results are also directly linked to the technology flexibility Enterprise Scheduler supports. Jeff Amundson explains, "Cross-enterprise, cross-platform coverage was important to us, and so was the ability to schedule and run any job with a command line interface." Combined with the Pervasive ETL solution, Enterprise Scheduler makes it possible for State Collection Service to use either a primarily open architecture Oracle or Microsoft SQL back end for data mining tasks. The company's IT staff can also run batch jobs that touch different applications.

In summary, the coverage, control, and ease-of-use delivered by Enterprise Scheduler translate into improved customer management, savings, and operational efficiency for State Collection Service.

Next Steps

Enterprise Scheduler has freed State Collection Service from a rather labor-intensive system for managing the transfer of file frameworks to and from its clients. It has increased accuracy of results and reduced operating costs. Equally important, it has enabled the company to maintain its enviable reputation for excellent customer service. Given its successful experience with the scheduler, State Collection Service plans to expand its use across the organization—including the scheduling of data back-up and archival jobs.

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Tidal Enterprise Scheduler, go to www.cisco.com.

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