



Opalis Software contributes to Steria's successful automation of IT operations

Making good on data center automation

An HP OpenView integration story

"The reliability of the software development process using the HP developer and integration tools enabled us to begin making our Opalis-HP Integration Packs commercially available within months."

—Peter Chapman, senior product manager, Opalis Integration Server

Managing multiple IT universes

The IT industry's focus on management software for service provisioning and data center operation continues to gather muscle. IT media and analysts are reporting ongoing developments, in particular those coming from Opalis Software, with regard to delivering critical, automated interfaces between point management tools.

Since its inception in 1991, Opalis has pioneered data center integration with tools for modeling, documenting, and automating data center processes—designed to help customers make the most of their IT staff. Using Opalis Software's Integration Server, customers use graphical drag and drop, fill-in-the-blanks, workflow environments to rapidly create high levels of integration and automation in the enterprise data center, all without scripting or custom coding. For more information on Opalis and its integrations, visit Opalis' [Opalis and HP integrations](#) web page.

In 2005 Opalis embarked on integrating its Integration Server with HP OpenView products. "Within a period of three months, developers at Opalis used the HP OpenView developer and integration tools to develop connectors, or points of integration, to the Opalis Integration Server, for HP OpenView Operations and Service Desk," reported Peter Chapman, Opalis product manager. "The reliability of the software development process using the HP developer tools for integration enabled us to begin making our HP Integration Packs commercially available almost immediately."

Steria automates IT operations

Steria, a joint customer of Opalis and HP, might look back on 2005 as its own banner year too—though not for reasons one usually expects from one of Europe's most prominent IT service providers. That was the year that Steria began investigating ways to automate and enhance IT operations. For many companies the nature of such projects is complicated by the large scale of network environments using legacy provisioning and configuration tools, and numerous point applications.

Attention to automating IT operations and management represents something relatively new for an industry that was previously focused on traditional cost-cutting measures. By using Opalis Software's Integration Server in conjunction with HP OpenView Operations and Service Desk, Steria is making significant gains in operational efficiency and reliability—benefits that directly impact the bottom line. For a complete discussion of Steria's use of HP OpenView, the [Steria success story](#) (PDF, 114 KB). For more information on Steria, visit the [Steria web site](#).

Consolidation via automation

One of Steria-Opalis' first automation initiatives is consolidation of its managed services centers in the European Delivery Centre (EDC). There are two centers that support Steria's customer companies with IT hosting and outsourcing services, both on site and remotely. The secure services are based on standardized methods, including ITIL and service performance indicators that leverage HP OpenView Operations for Windows and Service Desk.

Using Opalis Software's Integration Server, Steria has created object-oriented, event-driven automation policies, which provide high levels of integration and automation for enterprise management software like HP OpenView Operations and Service Desk. This is especially important for corporate networks comprising tens, hundreds, or even thousands of application servers.

Steria's example of successful IT management automation

Steps underlying Steria's success at harmonizing one of the largest IT environments in Europe, however, illustrate challenges confronting all service providers. Steria's customers are very large European companies and public authorities. They have installed HP OpenView solutions that provide an important foundation for a much more fine-grained monitoring and reporting that the company's IT group needed.

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Each month, several technical staffers were required to "scrape" data needed to provide comprehensive reports on the multi-tiered environment.

"Events can come at us from anywhere, from client applications or databases, an extensive range of network devices, servers, and other hardware," said Mark Laird, Technical Officer at Steria's European Delivery Center. Each customer of Steria represented very unique, discrete reporting challenges that imposed labor-intensive, repetitive tasks. "Looking into this, we found our technical staff spent as much as 25 percent of their time gathering data, analyzing it, and then preparing the reports. It was impossible to provide customer reports more often. We saw that it was critically important to support more frequent reporting to customers, as well as making daily service and provisioning trend reports available internally to Steria's technical team."

Laird's team now uses Opalis Integration Server to automate the reporting processes, including collection of data from thousands of devices, validation, analysis, and report creation. According to Laird, "The adaptability of Steria's automation becomes apparent as it is used successfully with a variety of customer companies in a number of industries, including companies that use 20 servers to others that use several hundred servers."

"Steria's team was exceptionally efficient," noted Chapman. "Thanks to the extensive documentation which models their processes, they needed only about four days to get the Opalis solution up and running in their production environment. In that short time, Steria developers were able to select the graphical representations of Opalis automation events and tasks and link them with our drag-and-drop methodology. As such, they quickly automated their highly complex IT processes, integrating the data collected by multiple management systems, into a single, comprehensive information repository."

Chapman commented on Opalis customers, now more than 500, describing how he and his team of engineers expect very complex, intricate management environments at each of their customer sites. "It's a fact of life and it makes ITIL initiatives and other projects to reduce operational expenses very challenging. So, when you look at what Steria has already accomplished in a very short time, we have convincing evidence that the time for automating data center operations is now."

Benefits bubble up

The next phase of the project will be to look at using Opalis to manage the integration between HP OpenView Operations and HP Service Desk. Currently Steria has done this integration for a small number of customers using point-to-point integration supplied with the HP OpenView products. However, while this results in an efficient linkage, it does pave the way for a maintenance headache in the future. Using the Opalis software to monitor for new and updated HP events, query existing events, create new events, update all data fields, and close events—all accomplished without the need for human interaction will minimize the integration effort and provide a much more supportable platform for the future.

Integrating the critical events from HP OpenView Operations into HP Service Desk automatically allows us to provide a much improved service to our customers by reducing data latency and human intervention.

Steria are now working with Opalis to look at how the software can be implemented within its client base to improve other business processes.

Integrating with HP OpenView

"Within a period of three months, developers at Opalis used the HP OpenView Software Developer's Kit to develop connectors, or points of integration to the Integration Server, for HP OpenView Operations and Service Desk," reported Peter Chapman, Opalis Product Manager. "The reliability of the software development process using HP's SDKs enabled us to make our Opalis-HP Integration Packs commercially available within months."

The HP OpenView Operations SDK, containing various interfaces, streamlined the Opalis integration efforts, and reduced the burden on development resources at various stages through testing. The SDK was downloaded from the [HP Dev Resource](#) portal. Chapman noted that Opalis developers downloaded and used the HP OpenView Operations data interface, finding that it supplied information from the HP OpenView Operations repository. In this way they ensured that the Opalis Integration Server could poll for information about the nodes managed by HP OpenView Operations that were out in the environment at any given time, their attributes, etc.

"To make the implementation as simple and fast as possible, we decided to use HP OpenView Interconnect Tools (OVI)," said Andreas Wieberneit, one of the key developers of Opalis' team. "The set of web services comes with a comprehensive set of documentation, which was important because learning how it works is critical to making fast progress with our integration plug-ins. Questions that came up during the design and implementation process were answered within a day on the HP OpenView Interconnect Forum." Since Opalis wanted to provide additional, first-time functionalities, Opalis developers used the C-API as well as direct reading access to the HP OpenView Operations for Windows database, implemented using XML message interfaces provided by the HP OVI framework.

So many common requests are now automated to such a significant degree that Steria's provisioning is now at near instantaneous service to customers. Equally important, the consolidation and automation of IT management enables Steria to focus on exceptional requests that proactively improve customer service.

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