

“RBA [Run Book Automation] tools will have a big impact on end-to-end automation and running IT operations as a business and providing consistent, better quality services at optimal cost.”
David William, Gartner

RUN BOOK AUTOMATION: JOB SCHEDULING FOR IT OPERATIONS





"IT managers have got to reduce the day-to-day decisions that software could automate... and it needs to include human processes, workflow and business priorities mapped into IT components"
Deb Curtis, Gartner

IT organizations are under increasing pressure to ensure high service levels and infrastructure efficiency, while lowering costs and adhering to best practices. As such, efforts to integrate systems and automate processes have become two key goals of IT professionals. To achieve these objectives means improving the level of automation within production and operations environments.

By increasing the levels of automation and eliminating common repetitive tasks, companies can reduce operational costs as well as reduce the amount of staff needed to manage the system(s) and reallocate highly skilled personnel to strategic projects. Automation provides the ability to have the system do more work in the same amount of time. Although the benefits of automation meets business objectives of reducing costs, increasing productivity and maximizing efficiency, the number one concern of IT managers is integration.

Run Book Automation Defined

The way we do business today is altering the level of automation and integration required within IT operations. Traditional automation methods, namely job schedulers, run and monitor batch jobs. Although job scheduling comprises an important function in a production-computing environment, it is not well suited to automate operational processes or run book procedures, as they provide little to no integration with surrounding systems.

Run Book Automation (RBA), a relatively new market, provides the orchestration, integration and automation of operational processes across multiple data, departmental, and application silos. This is done through IT-defined workflow that integrates the people, process and technologies involved in operational procedures.

Due to the recent recognition of this market, some companies have attempted to accomplish the equivalent of what is now known as RBA, by running lengthy scripts with a job scheduler, but this technique is costly, unreliable, and error prone.

While scripts and schedulers work well for small tasks, they rarely scale to handle complex environments. They also lack sophisticated dependencies and reporting that allow users to keep audit trails of processes. As process requirements grow, and more functionality is added, the result is a complex mix of scripts, programs, and utilities that only a few people actually understand. More concerning is that home-grown scripts can quickly turn into a full-time programming commitment as well as a time-consuming and costly management burden.

"Opalis' unique value-add is its ability to rapidly integrate and streamline IT operations workflows without the need for programming or scripts."

*Mary Turner,
Summit Strategies*

Using Run Book Automation Software for Job Scheduling Tasks

Run Book Automation solutions include many of the features and capabilities users require in a job scheduler, while also providing more advanced functions. Run Book Automation software can automate any administrative, maintenance or business processes, such as restarting services, rotating logs, backing up data, deleting temporary files, and e-mailing files. It can also run several jobs on multiple machines, modify accounts, query databases, upload data and filter/read/send e-mail.

In addition to standard enterprise requirements like load balancing, failover, failure routines, error handling, and logging, Run Book Automation Software also provides integration, orchestration, and workflow.

Integration

Integration is a key component in Run Book Automation software, as it provides the ability to query, modify, collect, parse, and pass data between systems and products. Unlike 'connector' products which simply transfer data between systems, Run Book Automation software uses data to make decisions, to dynamically configure task parameters with relevant run-time data, and to update systems such as configuration management databases and service desk applications with process information. This gives IT organizations the ability to update one or all systems with detailed information on a process. It also ensures help desk staff, and level 1-2-3 support staff has access to problem status.

Orchestration

Run Book Automation software also requires intelligent orchestration capabilities so it can initiate actions within 3rd party systems. The orchestration engine works in conjunction with integration capabilities to read results of these actions to determine next steps and to log/report on each step within the process. This is paramount for tracking change requests and maintenance procedures that interact with multiple systems and impact service availability. If a change request or maintenance procedure goes wrong, IT needs to determine the exact point of failure immediately.

Workflow

Workflow not only provides visual insight as to the nature of a process, it also delivers conditional logic and dependencies support needed to automate complex process. Workflow also enables branching capabilities, useful for creating incident management routines that handle a range of errors and conditions. The main workflow can define the expected process, while branches are used for exception cases, error handling and escalation routines.

"Opalis provides a standard, yet flexible framework for developing our processes. Our developers no longer have to deal with coding these processes from scratch and monitoring them each day to make sure they work correctly."
Southern Company

The Opalis Difference

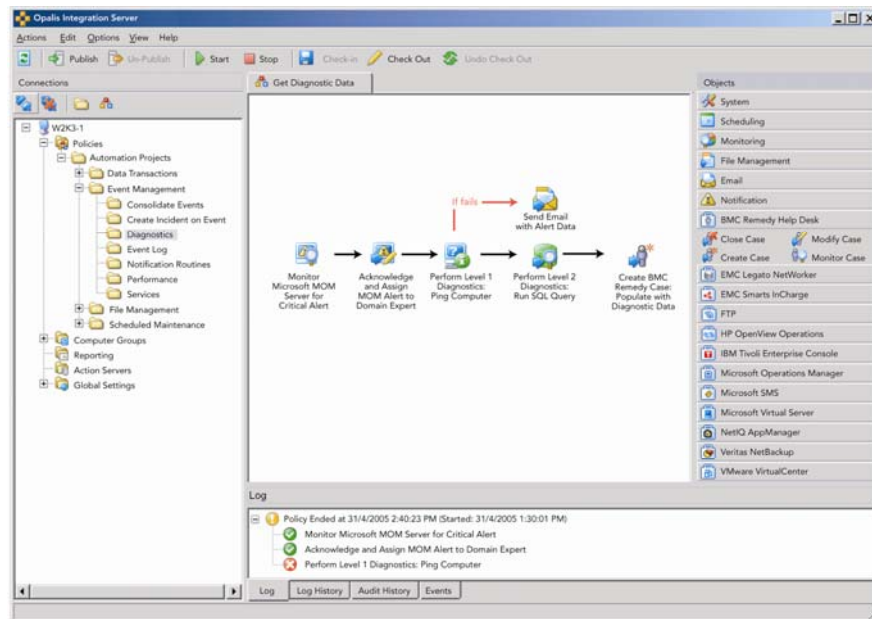
Opalis is the leading provider of Run Book Automation software. Currently, more than 550 global companies rely on Opalis to automate critical operational processes. These customers include Woolworths, Toyota, Nokia, Xerox, Kawasaki, Chrysler, Blue Cross, Harley-Davidson, and the U.S. Army.

With Opalis, companies can bridge application, department and data silos and automate Run Book Processes in a way that's simple, fast, and effective

SIMPLE: Opalis offers a unique script free solution to define and automate processes. This means IT professionals can implement automated processes without having to learn complex programming languages.

FAST: Opalis enables systems do more work in less time, so companies start realizing automation benefits of service quality, time and cost savings immediately.

EFFECTIVE: Opalis provides the largest and most comprehensive set of integration to points to leading data center tools, enabling integration between existing products that don't currently communicate.





Opalis Solution Areas

Incident Process Automation

Address unanticipated incident immediately to improve response time, meet SLA's and reduce support costs.

Problem Process Automation

Automate maintenance and remediation routines to reduce operational costs and ensure service availability.

Configuration Process Automation

Integrate data center tools and automatically update system information to reduce service interruption.

Change Process Automation

Integrate systems and automate change requests and approval processes to improve service delivery.

Release Process Automation

Automate roll out procedures and verification processes to improve availability and speed of delivery.

Contact

To learn more about how Opalis can help Integrate, Orchestrate and Automate IT Operations Run Book Procedures in your organization, contact:

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