



Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise Improves Quality of Life at Farm Credit Bank of Texas

By Josh Richards

Methods for measuring quality of life vary, but for Larry Neal, System i® developer at Farm Credit Bank of Texas, it's simple: "Keeping our operations staff at home in the evenings when we're running multiple systems."

Farm Credit Bank of Texas (FCBT) has been a leading source of credit and financial services for rural Americans for more than 90 years. Located in Austin, TX, FCBT's mission is to enhance the quality of life in rural America by using cooperative principles to provide competitive credit and superior service to customers. Internally, they are using Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise®, the cross-platform job scheduling software, to improve the quality of life for their operations staff.

FCBT currently has over 1,000 users accessing a System i model 550 with six partitions; a model 810 in San Antonio, TX; about 150 Microsoft SQL servers; and several DB2 servers running various versions of Windows Server. Larry says the need for a product like Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise has been building for a while. "There was definitely a need out there to be able to connect job schedules across multiple systems."

According to Larry, having multiple systems created problems when managing their job schedule. "As a bank, we do a lot of night processing on multiple systems with multiple operating systems. Things need to happen in a certain order, and there are so many dependencies that making the process hands-off is challenging. From the start, Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise looked promising."





One benefit that Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise provides is the ability to manage an entire enterprise from one central console. David Collins, manager of Operations for FCBT, explains, “Now we’re able to control the flow from one system. We use a central console exclusively with our current batch processing and we really like it. It’s very reliable, gives us all the information we need, and in some cases, we’ve used it to enter standardized messaging.”

The operations department is already taking advantage of Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise. Larry explains, “I really like being able to export to XML. It enhances how quickly we can copy an entire batch process and move it over to a test box or test environment.” Adds David, “When we set up test environments, they’re basically identical. But, we have to differentiate them from each other. Being able to modify the XML after we export it, and then import into another system—that’s major.”

Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise allows users to create agent environments that specify a user name, password, and working directory information. Larry describes how they use agent environments when they set up jobs, “An administrator can set up a user ID and password for a remote connection one time and we don’t have to put that in every job—we just put the agent environment in each job and none of us needs to know what that password is. This helps us with security and ease of maintenance.”

David says that Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise also has helped when auditors need to review their processes. “The auditors look at our job schedule

and the authority on our schedule. Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise helps because of its historical data. As far as reporting, we use archiving extensively—we generate thousands of reports almost nightly and weekly—so we keep a very extensive online and offline history of the reports to show auditors the proof or data that they’re looking for. We’re able to lock the product down so that people on call can see the jobs running, but can’t actually access the jobs or modify them.”

The FCBT operations team says the Help/Systems support team has been invaluable as they learned this new product. Jim Faraone, Senior Program Analyst, says, “I think they’ve been excellent when answering questions and providing the help we’ve needed along the way.” Larry adds, “We learned some really good things when Help/Systems came on-site for training. We had been doing things a certain way, and then found out there was an easier way to do them.” David agrees, “From an operations standpoint, we’ve been using Robot/SCHEDULE® for more than a decade and we’ve always bragged about Help/Systems service.”

The operations team at FCBT is very excited about the potential for Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise to help them with future projects. Larry explains, “We were totally perplexed about how we were going to merge the two night processes on the second lending system we’re going to implement. Now, we know how we’re going to make it work.”

Adds David, “Pre-Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise, because of our different platforms, we had to stop and wait and do a lot of different things to get the jobs to execute at certain times, in the right order. Now, there’s no waiting and having to guess how long a process will take. It’s made the night process a lot smoother.”

David sums up how Help/Systems and Robot/SCHEDULE Enterprise have dramatically lowered the number of calls their operators get in the middle of the night, “We’ve been running lights out for over eight years.” Now, that’s real quality of life!



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