



CASE STUDY *(IT Operations Management)*

AAA Life Leverages HelpSystems Solutions for IT Efficiency

Insurance company increases IBM i and Microsoft SQL Server job efficiency

Part of the American Automobile Association (AAA) family, AAA Life Insurance Company offers a variety of competitive life insurance, annuity, and travel accident products. With over one million policies, many people rely on AAA Life to help provide protection for their loved ones.

As Senior Systems Engineer at AAA Life, Randy Wittner is in charge of their IBM i environment, overseeing a 750 server with a POWER7+ processor. AAA Life uses IBM i to host three partitions. They have a second CBU box at an off-site vendor for high availability using iTERA to replicate. IBM i also runs some web services, their life insurance product (which includes a general ledger and claims module), and IT operations management solutions from HelpSystems.

Technology Teamwork

"We have three operators for three shifts and eight to ten RPG developers," said Wittner. "Everything on the IBM i platform that's not development falls on me. The rest of our environment is made up of Windows servers running one application/function each, and most of them connect to IBM i to get data, so it's the backbone of almost everything—the main system at AAA Life."

AAA Life relies on IT operations management software from HelpSystems to automate Microsoft SQL Server jobs. The team also relies on cybersecurity solutions from HelpSystems to escalate developer rights. "If I'm not available, my backup can work with a few developers who know IBM i administration very well to figure out what is needed," continued Wittner.

AAA Life also relies on workload automation and job scheduling solutions from HelpSystems to schedule non-IBM i jobs and to communicate with vendors via SFTP server. They've used HelpSystems software to automate over 2,000 jobs in their SQL environment.

AT-A-GLANCE



Company	American Automobile Association (AAA)
Industry	Automotive Services

PROBLEMS SOLVED

- Automating jobs across systems
- Monitoring subsystems and jobs
- Establishing two-way notification for system issues
- Running backups unattended
- Managing and escalating developer rights

KEY SOLUTIONS

Workload Automation & Job Scheduling
Data Backup Management
Message & Event Monitoring
Identification & Access Management

RESULTS

- 2,000 SQL jobs automated
- 500+ IBM i jobs automated
- 0 downtime for backups in production

Flexible Scheduling

HelpSystems solutions were already in place when Wittner joined the team in 2002, but he has over 25 years of experience on IBM i, and AAA Life was not the first place he encountered HelpSystems. "I've worked at many companies that have had HelpSystems products, so good market share," said Wittner. "HelpSystems workload automation software is very reliable, easy to upgrade. It automates a lot for us in our process."

Using HelpSystems solutions, AAA Life has automated between 500 and 700 IBM i jobs. Over the years, Wittner has redesigned things in the software to make their schedule more efficient. He explained, "We didn't have the groups or jobs we have now. We have jobs that run every hour during the day, certain hours, weekly, daily. We have reactive jobs for dependencies. We have a nightly process that runs five nights a week using group jobs. We use OPAL code, date objects, the calendar, command variables; we use almost everything you can use on it."

Important Notifications

Before Wittner started, AAA Life did not check to see if subsystems were up. "It was basically if they noticed or when they noticed," he explained. "Now, I get a page if the iTERA subsystem isn't up, if web service isn't up, if the MQ message depth is too high—I set up things like that which didn't exist before."

To send these notifications, Wittner uses message and event monitoring solutions from HelpSystems, which allow him the flexibility to notify different devices. "It works great to our BlackBerrys, through email, and all that," he said. "The escalation is a good way to go with the acknowledgement requirement."

The team customizes their message responses, and many are set up to use two-way alerting capabilities so on-call staff can send replies back to QSYSOPR directly from their device.



Image credit: <http://aidginc.com>

Unattended Backups

Another feature that makes work at AAA Life easier is the restricted state utility in Robot SAVE, a data backup management solution from HelpSystems. "We use the restricted state weekly so we can get a good, full save automated on all of our LPARs," said Wittner. "We're also pretty unique in that we're basically only backing up with the HA box—the production box replicates and we back it up over there. We don't have any downtime for backups in production."

They use a reactive job in Robot Schedule, a job scheduling solution, to kick off this process.

"It's basically a one-stop shop," said Wittner. "The products have always worked great; product support is friendly and willing to help. I consider HelpSystems one of the leaders in IBM i vendors and tools."