



Rethink automation.

UC4 at Heart of Thales CORE Infrastructure

The Company

Thales is a major industrial force in the UK with 9,000 employees based at 60 locations throughout all regions. Thales UK provides systems at the heart of the UK's military capability as well as delivering service and security solution for both defence and civil applications from flight simulation and training provision to secure transactions and integrated communications.

The Situation

With over 20 separate companies running individual systems, Thales UK was reliant upon a multitude of ERP and project management tools ranging from MS-Project through to a suite of legacy-based systems featuring CODA-IAS Financials, Cincom Control:Open and UGS Sherpa. It was difficult to consolidate data across systems and gain an enterprise view of how staff was being utilized or equipment deployed. Thales recognized that the adoption of a common set of processes across all divisions would enable greater visibility and improved control over projects throughout their business. A new application portfolio was required that would offer seamless integration as well as deep insight into all aspects of Thales business operations.

The Challenge

Oracle E-Business Suite was selected as the corporate Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution while Primavera was preferred for Enterprise Project Management (EPM). Corporate HR services would be delivered using Northgate HR while IMSCAN would perform invoice scanning, recognition and workflow. Project data would continue to be collected by an in-house developed timesheet system, Oracle Discoverer would provide management with Business Intelligence (BI) and ad-hoc reporting. Thales Application Managed Services (AMS) UK was tasked with delivering the Thales CORE infrastructure solution into all Thales UK business units. Knowing they needed to manage external interfaces and run significant batch workload,

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Ron Ekins,
Business Architect Consultant at Thales AMS UK

Thales

Business: Defence System Supplier

Head Office UK: Addlestone, United Kingdom

Presence: Worldwide

Webpage: www.thalesgroup.com/uk

UC4 Benefits

- Implementation time reduced by over five months
- Consistent & timely execution of end-to-end processes
- Reduced problem resolution times
- Increased staff productivity

CASE STUDY

Thales AMS UK swiftly determined that an automated scheduler would help improve throughput and reduce maintenance overheads. Thales' existing scheduling provider didn't offer Oracle EBS integration and the previous product implementation had taken 6 months. Thales AMS decided to look for alternatives based on the following criteria:

- Oracle E-Business Suite integration
- Audit trail and reporting
- Management of log files
- Easy configuration without custom scripting
- Control of Oracle Concurrent Manager requests
- Support for Windows server and LINUX platforms
- Rapid deployment

Ron Ekins, Business Architect Consultant at Thales AMS UK, takes up the story, "We were familiar with scheduling techniques – we had used a tool to manage our legacy workload. What was different about this project was that we needed a product that could manage and schedule applications. Also, integration was considered to be an IT problem and it would be our job to make sure that applications could talk with each other."

The Solution

"The UC4 platform was the only product that fully satisfied our requirements. All of the standard capabilities – scheduling, dependencies, monitoring, reporting, alerting – were provided 'out of the box'. Where we noticed a big difference was in the ability to build one process definition that could be easily migrated between systems and business divisions with simple parameter changes. We didn't need to code custom scripts. It was easy to get something up and running quickly. This helped us reduce implementation costs."

Thales AMS UK automated the MRP process in two days; automation of daily processing in Oracle Financials took the same time. Without the UC4 platform, these tasks would have taken months to complete. The UC4 platform manages all external interfaces in the CORE environment as well as the timely exchange of information between Oracle EBS, Primavera Project Manager, timesheet, Northgate HR, IMSCAN and other systems. Thales AMS UK automates any ad-hoc task that runs on a repeated basis.

The Results

Processes are visible, fully documented and less reliant upon script code with the UC4 platform. Thales UK senior management, as well as operational staff, benefit from in-depth views, detailed monitoring and granular control of business processes. There is less need for skilled staff to submit jobs, monitor systems and analyze problems.

"Our workload is highly visible within the UC4 platform, with its intuitive graphical user interface. When we run cross-platform interfaces to diagnose problems, you don't have to look in multiple places", comments Ekins. "The UC4 console brings this all together to provide us with a consolidated view – mean time to problem resolution is reduced."

Thales AMS UK has also eliminated the need for operators to manually enter runtime values for jobs. "Operators don't need to supply Primavera interface scripts with parameters, such as Division Code, account or password information. Similarly with Oracle EBS, there's no need for operators to set concurrent manager attributes. This can all be predefined and controlled when configuring jobs with the UC4 platform", reports Ekins. "We can go home at night and know a job sequence will start and complete with the right values and that any problem will be alerted and dealt with." Removing the Need for Manual Checking There are a lot of reports that need checking in the CORE environment after jobs complete. Thales AMS UK plans to use the UC4 output scanning feature to check report content for exception messages and detailed field values. Not only will this ensure a significant reduction in end user workload, it will also improve accuracy and efficiency across CORE business processes.

Ekins concludes, "The UC4 platform has been used to automate our project management, finance and HR processes. We've used it to integrate accounts payable with IMSCAN for PO matching of invoices. Next steps include automating accounts receivable, project accounting and general ledger. After that – who knows? What we do know is that whenever we are asked about doing something new, one of the first questions we ask ourselves is 'Can we automate it with the UC4 platform?'"