BMC Control-M V8.0: Making Workload Automation Simple

With its acquisition of New Dimension Software over a decade ago, BMC was determined to make a major mark in workload management. Since then, BMC Control-M has established and maintained its position as a consistent leader in the workload automation solutions market segment. Through multiple changes in data center operations and the evolving management demands of mainframe and distributed computing, BMC Control-M grew and adapted to meet and exceed IT and business user expectations.

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As we documented in our whitepaper[1] last year, even the difficulties of real-time demands and complexity involved in managing and scheduling a proliferating virtualized infrastructure are being competently handled for a growing and very satisfied collection of users. Control-M functionality has contributed to the success of virtualization efforts to reduce costs while improving efficiency, availability, flexibility and manageability of existing infrastructure.

The data center, IT operations and the application of computing infrastructure continue to grow in complexity. This adds and poses new challenges for the providers, managers and consumers of these services. As a result, the tools and management solutions needed to monitor, apply, manage and leverage the capabilities to realize the maximum benefit must also evolve and adapt to the new environment.

To keep pace, BMC Control-M is extending the concepts which underlie and the capabilities delivered in its workload automation solution. The anticipated result is that organizations using BMC Control-M will be better positioned to realize the reduced costs and increased efficiency benefits in their Workload Automation environment. BMC recently introduced the latest version, BMC Control-M V8. As part of the launch messaging they stated *'We re-invented Workload Automation. Now we are re-inventing how you use it'*. Let's examine what they are doing to back that up.

What's New?

The delivery and consumption of data center services continues to change. Intelligent infrastructure that is aware of and adapts to workloads is becoming commonplace. New ways to develop applications (aka services), plus the fact that those applications need to be updated almost as soon as they are delivered to operations as well as undergo near continuous updates in response to business needs, adds to the complexity and challenge of IT operations.

As IT activities become more closely tied to and integrated with the delivery of the services that define the organization, workload management and scheduling services are of more and more interest to business-oriented users. It's not that IT operations and scheduling staff are less involved; it's that the metrics, the measurements and the impact on both IT and the business users have to be understood and managed. Service delivery and infrastructure management must be aware of and respond to their impact on the business and its customers. This means

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[1]*BMC's Control-M: Workload Automation, Adding Value as it Manages the Virtual Environment,* 2011, www.ptaknoel.com

both groups must be able to interact and communicate consistently, effectively and clearly in terms that are readily understood by both sides.

The trend in the data center (and elsewhere) is toward more complexity and sophistication in infrastructure, its application and the services delivered. The convergence of powerful, integrated technology with creative, competitive developers responding to increasingly sophisticated and demanding users will continue to drive for innovation in the creation and delivery of services. All of these contribute to escalate the complexity and challenge inherent in exploiting, managing and controlling IT technology and services.

Addressing these challenges requires making significant changes to traditional techniques of workload management in order to simplify operations, facilitate interaction, speed reaction times, and facilitate communications in meaningful ways. This must be done as operations, dependencies, interactions and technology increase the diversity and complexity of the infrastructure, access (remote management, customer access, etc.), devices (mobile, BYOD, iPads, etc.) and services. Both IT and business users need tools that are agile, accessible, and increasingly more powerful for monitoring, managing and controlling.

BMC responded with a strategy of simplification. A new, fully integrated user graphical interface (GUI) provides all users a single entry point to domain specific workspaces. Each supported management domain i.e. planning, monitoring, history, forecast, tools is now accessible through this single interface and includes the capability to drill-down for additional detail. Functional access control is exercised based on automatically enforced policies and role definition. Each domain was designed to support the work pattern, metrics and responsibilities of the respective user.

Centralized Management facilitates collaboration and makes communication easier. Business user oriented monitoring allows access to information on job status, job performance, etc. It provides the ability to drill down for additional detail as well as searching using multiple criteria including job name, as well as much more. The Planning domain has a collaborative workspace that allows involved users to interact with each other as well as see workflow definition changes being made as they are defined, re-defined or modified. The Forecasting capability provides easy access to analytics for what-if and impact analysis. The Tools domain assembles all the tools for job selection, submission, processing, infrastructure allocation, etc. into a single tab for easy and quick access.

BMC collaborated with nearly 100 customers during the development and update process for this version of Control-M. The benefit and impact of this deep depth cooperation and interaction are evident in other features of this version. There is the increase by 2 to 5 times in manageable server capacity. Thread pools are used for job selection, submission and post-processing to leverage and benefit from all available processor resources. Job flows execute more quickly cutting the time between jobs and allowing more jobs to be viewed in the GUI. Here is an example of what customers are saying: *"Control-M 8 is simple. It just makes sense."* from Dax Johnson at UC Berkeley.

The Final Word

Downtime and slow service response are anathema to consumers of business services because such disruptions upset customers and decrease revenues. This is just one reason business managers want to be able to monitor the status and history of service delivery.

But, such service interruptions are just as problematic to IT operations staff supporting their business partners. This is because it is their responsibility to maintain and manage the delivery infrastructure and processes in addition to creating new services, assuring SLA's are met, etc. It is axiomatic that consistent success at meeting customer expectations requires complementary efforts of both teams.

Enterprises have tried a variety of ways to bring the two groups together, with varying degrees of what is often inconsistent success. BMC's approach is to simplify access and facilitate the use of the full functionality and capabilities of its solution. AND, then to go further to create an interface and workspace that facilitates and encourages communication and cooperation.

In our opinion, it was a combination of the creativity of BMC's staff and on-going interactions with customers that make this version of Control-M so attractive. We expect that it will, once again, claim a lead in workload management solutions.

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About Ptak, Noel & Associates LLC
We help IT organizations become "solution initiators" in using IT management technology to resolve business problems. We do that by translating vendor strategy & deliverables into a business context that is communicable and actionable by the IT manager, and by helping our clients understand how other IT organizations are effectively implementing solutions with their business counterparts. Our customers recognize the meaningful breadth and objectively of our research in IT management technology and process.

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About the Author

Richard Ptak has over 30 years' experience in systems product management working closely with Fortune 50 companies in developing product direction and strategies at a global level. Previously Ptak held positions as senior vice president at Hurwitz Group and D.H. Brown Associates. Earlier in his career he held engineering and marketing management positions with Western Electric's Electronic Switch Manufacturing Division and Digital Equipment Corporation. He is frequently quoted in major business and trade press. Ptak holds a master's in business administration from the University of Chicago and a master of science in engineering from Kansas State University.