



"The historical work with active jobs module of Director is invaluable from a security standpoint. It provides a snapshot of jobs that were active in the past. So, if we have any questions about suspicious activity during a particular period, we can easily determine what had been going on in the system at that time."

Larry Ketzes, Senior iSeries System Administrator

Business Profile

American Life Insurance Company (ALICO)
An AIG Company

Headquarters:
Wilmington, Delaware, USA

Industry:
Insurance

Business Size:
American Life Insurance Company (ALICO), an AIG company, is one of the largest international financial service companies in the world. ALICO conducts business in more than 55 countries and regions, including Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Japan, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Business Environment:

- Incorporated in Delaware USA in 1921.
- Provides a wide range of wealth management, retirement planning, life and health insurance solutions to millions of individuals and corporate customers.

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions & ALICO

Critical Issue

The Wilmington, Delaware home office of ALICO serves as the IT development shop for all of ALICO's production offices around the world. For each of these offices, the Wilmington IT department codes, enhances and fixes applications; installs new releases; resolves issues; manages disk storage space; and, when necessary, restores entire computing environments.

As a result of its roles, the Wilmington IT department must closely track software versions in use at ALICO offices around the world as different offices use different "flavors" of the same applications.

Results

- Reduced disk storage requirements.
- Reduced spool file usage, which, in turn, improved performance.
- Provided the ability to comprehensively audit past activity.
- Allowed for a very granular review of system performance.
- Augmented the IT departments troubleshooting capabilities.
- Improved the cataloging of applications in use at all offices worldwide.
- Performance improvements allowed the company to defer server upgrades.

Technologies

- Vision Director
- IBM System i Model 520 with three IPAR partitions (production, development and test)

Business Challenge

In the past, ALICO ran repeated queries to determine resource usage on its IBM i systems. Each time, the query parameters would be changed to get the precise information that the IT department needed. This work was time-consuming, cumbersome and repetitive. To overcome this burden, the company wanted software designed specifically to monitor the health of its systems.

Furthermore, it was difficult for ALICO's central IT department to scrutinize the contents of the disks used by the company's offices around the world. ALICO wanted a way to find, delete and/or archive obsolete data and objects in order to reclaim wasted disk space.

The company also needed a way to track all of the software in use in each of the operating units. ALICO offices in different parts of the world don't all use the same software applications. And some offices use different "flavors" of the applications used in other offices. Thus, to avoid updating the wrong software when performing application maintenance for one of the offices, the central IT department needed to keep track of which offices use which software versions.



Solution

ALICO installed Vision Director to meet these challenges. Director automates many critical System i administration and management tasks and allows them to be run while users remain active on the system. The result is faster application response times and reduced storage costs.

Larry Ketzes, senior iSeries systems administrator at ALICO, reports that the installation of Director was “absolutely simple.”

The IT department uses Director to analyze historical system performance hour-by-hour. Included in this reporting facility is the ability to review disk usage, cpu usage, the number of jobs that were running and the three most resource-heavy jobs that were running at various times of day. ALICO finds this to be an invaluable tool when it comes to tuning system usage and performance.

The historical activity reports are also used as a security tool, allowing ALICO to audit who did what at critical points in the past.

The disk storage reporting capabilities of Director allow ALICO’s home office IT department to easily catalog which “flavor” of various applications is in use at each of ALICO’s offices around the world. This reduces the chance of the wrong version of the software being installed in an office when fixes or upgrades are applied to the applications.

ALICO also takes advantages of Director’s many automated features to perform regular system “housecleaning” functions in the background, without the need for any operator intervention.

In addition to its extensive query and reporting features, Director offers a customizable Health Report that provides a comprehensive, detailed snapshot of the health of an IBM i server. In addition to a summary of key metrics, it provides detail pages that provide extensive insight into all current operating characteristics of the server.

Ketzes feels that it is very helpful to run the Health Report when Director is first installed and then again once every quarter. “That’s the real eye-opener report,” says Ketzes.



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