

MACRO SCHEDULER AUTOMATION SOLUTION AT IOWA LASER TECHNOLOGY INC - OVER \$75,000 PER YEAR SAVED THROUGH INCREASED EFFICIENCY



Business Challenge

Iowa Laser Technology, Inc. (ILT) has been serving manufacturers in the automotive, agricultural, mining, construction, and fitness industries for over a quarter century. They are one of the oldest laser processing facilities in the United States, and the company has recognized and advanced the benefits of laser cutting as a manufacturing technology. ILT presents a multi-disciplinary manufacturing facility, offering automated sheet/plate laser cutting, laser tube cutting, laser welding and laser heat treating, forming, conventional and robotic welding, CNC machining, and complete manufacturing engineering services. ILT's Information Systems Manager was seeking an easier way to write numerous reports without learning programming language. The company found they had an immediate need for writing software packages that could perform the task of reading, reformatting and recreating text files. As a result, ILT sought to find the best price/performance software that would meet the company's automated report writing needs.

Solution

Dick Lockey is the Information Systems Manager at Iowa Laser Technology, Inc. As the company grew, Mr. Lockey found he had several dozen reports he was required to run each morning – tying up his computer for the first few hours of each day. In an effort to streamline the process, he evaluated Java and Visual Basic. However, both of these solutions would have required advanced development skills not readily available at ILT. The cost involved in acquiring those skills – either from training or hiring – or outsourcing development, was considered too high and time consuming.

Due to the lack of functionality in regards to ILT's specific needs – both Java and Visual basic were eliminated in the review process. ILT implemented on a trial basis for one year Insight Software Solutions, Inc.'s Macro Express. It had the basics of what the company was seeking without learning programming languages – but it also had limited features. After an expansion of product reviews, ILT implemented MJT Net Ltd.'s Macro Scheduler – with the same ease of use as Macro Express – but it had more robust functionality with an extensive feature set.

The function that convinced ILT to permanently adopt MJT Net Ltd.'s Macro Scheduler was the software's ability to compile macros into an executable file. This specific function allowed Mr. Lockey to write a macro that he could distribute to any or all of the 100 other computers he administered.

As Lockey states, "Macro Scheduler's capabilities out-performed all of its competitors. In addition to "normal" macro functions like moving the mouse cursor or entering text or opening application windows, Macro Scheduler also offers embedded Visual Basic Script. The Libfunc function allows you to use Windows APIs directly within a script. Image manipulation lets you capture and display images. Images can also be embedded within a script for display or for the purpose of screen image recognition that can make the automation of some otherwise very unfriendly applications possible. And there is that all important ability to compile any script into a stand alone program that can be run on any modern Windows computer."

In addition, Lockey cites Macro Scheduler's low learning curve as its biggest strength, "It is possible to write usable macros in less than a day and in only a few minutes a new user can record a macro. But flexibility is also its key - I can do just about any computer-related task with it, from manipulating data within files, and managing those files to automating any application or even creating my own applications."

Business Value/Results

Mr. Lockey has Macro Scheduler-generated executables on every computer at ILT. All users have experienced efficiency enhancements, auto log-ons, and image manipulation. Seven employees actively use Macro Scheduler as a utility on their computer and directly benefit on a daily basis from its robust functionality and extended feature set.

Mr. Lockey estimates Macro Scheduler processes now save the company around 8 hours per day that were previously carried out manually. At an average department charge-out cost of \$40/hour - that's a saving of \$320/day which translates to over \$75,000 per year, and allows more efficient use of human resource.

The software allowed them to automate much of their annual inventory check, eliminating the need for 5 people working 4 days each. Inventory automation has removed the need for one member of staff, allowing more productive use of that person. Manual daily report production that used to take three hours per day is now also fully automated.

Further efficiencies have been made by streamlining system administration. A network backup system was improved using Macro Scheduler, saving an estimated one hour per day and ensuring the backups are completed in a shorter timeframe.

These improved efficiencies translate into benefits for ILT's customers too, by reducing lead times and freeing up resource to work on what really matters - providing services to the manufacturing industry.

Additional direct results include:

- **Saves Time:**
 - ILT is able to run reports overnight rather than wasting the first few hours of the day running reports manually.
 - ILT has multiple "helps" for their ERP software where a customer or vendor sends lists of parts and quantities in Excel files. ILT uses Macro Scheduler to acquire the data from the Excel worksheet and open the appropriate screens in the ERP application to put the acquired data into the correct fields. One example is a list of usually around 100 items from one of ILT's vendors. Lockey uses the vendor's list to generate ILT's purchase order. It would take two hours to type the information manually. It takes two minutes using Macro Scheduler. In addition, ILT is assured that the information was entered correctly.
 - ILT has numerous electronic forms written using Macro Scheduler dialogs that replace paper forms. The advantage to these is not in data input but rather in the time to retrieve a form. As Lockey states, "I'm currently working on an electronic form for storing information about revision levels of customer supplied drawings. Currently there is a piece of paper that provides specifics of any drawing changes stuffed in a folder kept in a drawer of a file cabinet within a room full of file cabinets for each drawing supplied by our customers. We have 700,000 routers in our system so there are potentially 700,000 drawings each with multiple revision level forms. To retrieve one today requires a person to go to the file cabinets find the customer file and pull the data sheet. Soon we'll start saving these via a Macro Scheduler dialog to text files rather than paper forms. The text file data can be instantly retrieved by entering a customer number and a part number in the Macro Scheduler dialog.

- **Detailed:** Some ILT reports have data re-written by Macro Scheduler before they are automatically e-mails by the software to the correct individuals.
- **Outstanding Customer Support:** MJT Net Ltd. Support is fast and accurate.
- **Eliminates paperwork**

For more information visit:

- MJT Net Ltd: <http://www.mjtnet.com/>
- Iowa Laser Technology, Inc.: <http://www.iowalaser.com/>
- Macro Scheduler: http://www.mjtnet.com/macro_scheduler.htm

About MJT Net Ltd

MJT Net Ltd develops and markets automation utilities and productivity software for business and home Windows users. Their flagship product, Macro Scheduler, was first released in 1997. With over 30,000 companies and individuals utilizing Macro Scheduler technologies, MJT Net has become synonymous with software automation and automated testing.