



Macro Scheduler User Podcast Interview: Phil Lewis from Siemens

Interview by Tracy Fitzpatrick

FITZPATRICK: Hello, this is Tracy Fitzpatrick, and I'm interviewing Macro Scheduler User Phil Lewis, a network specialist with Siemens. Hi Phil, thank you for joining us.

LEWIS: Hi.

FITZPATRICK: So Phil, I know one of the things we can't do is, necessarily, talk about the specific Siemens client that you're using the Macro Scheduler for. But we're saying that it's an extremely large, worldwide corporation that everyone is familiar with. So, enough said there. And so maybe you could tell us a little bit about how you're using the Macro Scheduler for that client now.

LEWIS: Ok. Well, in simple terms we have, we manage a DNS, DHEP environment for a Class A network. And in order to do that we have distributed DNS, DHEP servers, toss it around the world, at approximately three hundred locations.

FITZPATRICK: That's a lot.

LEWIS: These servers, over time, have snags monitoring them, etcetera, etcetera, but we have, we've, over time, been asked to collect different levels of information from the servers. And that has proved in the past, to be very difficult to do sometimes. These requests can be ad lib, certainly one day we'll get a request to say how many queries are coming in to a particular server, or a number of servers within a given global region. And so to collect this information can be very difficult. One of the reasons it's difficult is because we, don't choose to keep a hired professional on site, who is a programmer, just for this purpose. And therefore, naturally, that would be very expensive to do. So from my point of view I started looking around at different options, and I came across Macro Scheduler. Up until the time I came across Macro Scheduler, I had never been able to program, or had very little understanding of programming. After downloading the demo and starting to use it, I found it extremely easy to use and very flexible. But the important thing it gave me was the ability to catch or capture information from these 300 servers globally, bring them back to a central point, and then write short scripts that could extract the information I was looking for.



FITZPATRICK: Ok, ok. So essentially, it sounds like you were able to be extremely, or you are able to be extremely nimble because of the Macro Scheduler.

LEWIS: That's right.

FITZPATRICK: And you are able to do this without hiring a full time programmer. And can you tell me approximately, you know, sort of ballpark, how much would it cost you to employ a full time programmer where you're at?

LEWIS: Probably between 65 and 85-thousand a year, US.

FITZPATRICK: Wow. Ok, so that's a considerable amount of money that you're able to save. And you know, is there also a considerable amount of time that you're able to save by using the Macro Scheduler?

LEWIS: There is. There is. From my perspective, sometimes I'll be asked the question, I need to get information to be able to transfer that information to someone else and get them to fully understand what I'm looking for. It can be very difficult. A) Because if I get a generalized programmer, they're not always fully conversant with DNS or DHEP. I have to then start teaching them to where on the individual servers to collect the information from. What to turn on to get that information, and really it's a mini-craft in what we do. And just that on its own can be really time consuming, and tedious. So this allows me to be able to quickly design a small script to be able to go in and get the information I want. The other thing that I found that it does, is it... and I say this with a recent effort of Sarbanes Oxley, regulations have come in that have made security much, much more important than it ever was before and how we handle that security. And that can be something as easy as changing passwords. To where someone will say, we need to change passwords on these 300 servers very quickly. Traditional methods of doing that can take up to 24 hours.

FITZPATRICK: Especially on 300 servers, and you're dealing with the different time zones, and all that, right?

LEWIS: Right.

FITZPATRICK: So I would think that would add some complexity?



LEWIS: It does, but I can tell you that running a small script in Macro Scheduler, I can do that within 35 to 45 minutes, globally. Which really helps us considerably.

FITZPATRICK: Ok. ...With the SOX regulations... Well that's great. So you're able to be much more efficient it sounds like.

LEWIS: That's right. That's right. With such a large company. You know, before we (I) had this, if I didn't have a programmer, I'd have to put a change control in, go through someone else and get approvals, and then go off to one of the general programmers that would kind of get 'round to it. And by the time they did, any information we needed had been lost. So being able to do this has proved a huge benefit for me. And quite honestly as well, from a personal point of view, it tends to put a good light on me because people upstairs can say, wow, this guy can get our information really quickly.

FITZPATRICK: People love that. Especially in a company that large. If they know, hey, we can just go to Phil and he can move quicker than quick..

LEWIS: Right.

FITZPATRICK: That's great.

LEWIS: DNS queries and that kind of thing we've got something like, we could have maybe a thousand queries a second coming in on any particular server. So someone says to me, the radius servers went out on Tuesday or had gone out yesterday, we don't know why, we need to investigate what's actually going on. I have to move pretty quickly to get that information before it's lost. And those are the types of things they give to me. I'm sort of the last resort, why did something break... and I go and dig in. And be able to take out this information and then run a small query to go in and say count all numbers of queries that came from this device between 8 and 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning.

FITZPATRICK: Now what kind of information would you be looking for there?

LEWIS: Whether there'd been a rogue device on the network.

FITZPATRICK: Ok, Ok. I was thinking that was it, but I just wanted to just...



LEWIS: We have, we have Wireless users around the world, and they come in through radius servers. A couple of weeks ago the radius servers were being hit with 2000objects per second, and...

FITZPATRICK: Something's up...

LEWIS: It caused a major outage, and when we talk about major outages, we talk about millions of dollars being lost per half hour. So these things are going to get fixed real fast. And someone will say, well, you know, what's actually happening here? And I've got to start digging in to find out what the radius server's trying to connect to, how it's trying to connect and start to break down a pattern to where things have gone wrong. And so I might go back, as I did in this case, and say to them, well I could show you here that through this given period of time the radius server was not communicating with the DNS structure. And as such, going into a negative cache state. And was refusing the queries, which was why they weren't being processed. So it was actually the underlying operating system that held up the radius server. And work it out for them, basically.

FITZPATRICK: Well, Phil, thank you very much for your time. Now for our audience, if you found this Macro Scheduler story useful, you may like to listen to our other user story podcasts by visiting our website at www.mjtnet.com . If you have a story of your own you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you. Send us an email to sharemystory@mjtnet.com . Phil, thanks again for your time.

LEWIS: Thank you.