

Case Study

Hewlett-Packard's Reference Test Lab Streamlines Operations

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Fast Facts:

- Company – Hewlett-Packard Corporation
- Application – LabTrax (HP's branded version of QATrax)
- Architecture – N-tier
- Hardware – HP Servers
- Database – Borland InterBase
- Industry – Discrete Manufacturing

Background

HP is a leading provider of products, technologies, solutions and services to consumers and businesses. The company's offerings span IT infrastructure, personal computing and access devices, global services, and imaging and printing. As a result of a merger with Compaq Computer Corporation in May 2002, the new HP has over 145,000 employees with operations in more than 160 countries. In fiscal 2001, the merged company would have had combined revenue of approximately \$81.7 billion (U.S.).

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With a \$4 billion (U.S.) annual R&D investment, HP fuels the invention of products, solutions and new technologies to better serve customers and enter new markets. Being a company founded upon invention, HP test lab operations are a critical link in their ability to quickly bring innovative and reliable products to market. As the pace of change quickens, HP test labs face an increasing demand from their customers that put a strain on their ability to quickly add resources.

HP's Reference Test Lab (RHTC), located in Roseville, CA, identified two key operational areas suffering a great strain. Firstly, as the number of projects grew, the job of the scheduler exponentially increased in difficulty. Scheduling the flow of many tests from many simultaneous projects requires the use of the same limited resources (primarily the expensive test lab equipment). At the same time, dealing with constant schedule changes resulted in a paradoxical situation of having a backlog of work yet also having frequent downtime and idle resources.

Secondly, the outgrowth of the scheduling complexity was a lack of visibility over projects. With a continuous stream of project requests and schedule changes, the RHTC found it increasingly difficult to accurately and efficiently communicate project status and timelines to their customers and to management.

Clearly, HP needed a solution that could directly address their scheduling problems as well as provide the needed visibility to provide effective communication and superior service to their customers.

Solution

HP chose QATrax, a real-time test lab management solution. Built around TraxStar's robust 3-tier framework architecture, QATrax enables HP to easily share information across the enterprise and helps the company improve test lab operations, visibility, flexibility, and quality.

With QATrax, HP is able to effectively coordinate all test lab activities with a simple and intuitive scheduling interface. "QATrax gives us tremendous visibility and control of our lab operations," says the HP Roseville Hardware Test Center Scheduler. "Using this completely integrated test lab solution, we have been able to eliminate duplication of effort and reduce equipment downtime. Plus, the real-time data supplied by QATrax empowers us to better meet customer demands by allowing us to shuffle our testing schedules on the fly."

QATrax utilizes TraxStar's unique framework architecture, which provides the power, flexibility, scalability, and reliability needed to address the complex problems faced by test labs. Further, the QATrax framework uses a robust metadata-driven design that allows it to rapidly evolve as customers' demands change. With over 80% code reusability, TraxStar is able to customize its products when customers need it and without lengthy development timelines.

Benefits

Real-time Visibility into Operations

To better serve customers, HP test labs needed real-time visibility of their projects. QATrax supplies test lab personnel with the right information at the right time, to effectively communicate project status to their customers and quickly handle exceptions, preventing them from bottlenecking their process.

By eliminating a mountain of backlogged paperwork, managers now have at their fingertips an accurate and up to date view of their test labs "I use the QATrax QuickView for a quick overview of our projects" says the HP Roseville Hardware Test Center Manager. "If there are any exceptions, I can quickly act to fix them before they become debilitating."

Easy to Use Scheduling Interface

Perhaps, the greatest gains for HP have been realized in the enhanced ability to schedule test lab projects. "What used to take me an hour now only takes a matter of minutes with QATrax," reports the scheduler. "I can now devote more time to my customers and address their specific needs."

QATrax's scheduling empowers HP to more effectively allocate available resources to critical projects. QATrax's power and ease-of-use have turned an hour-long scheduling process into mere minutes.

Looking Towards the Future

"We are enthusiastic about expanding our usage of QATrax", says the Manager. "Working with TraxStar, we plan to extend QATrax to reach further across our enterprise. Significant benefits can be realized by further integrating QATrax with our other systems. Further, we are improving our customer communications by giving them more visibility into their own projects. Going forward, QATrax will be at the nexus of our operations and will enable both internal and external communication channels to supply the right information to the right people at the right time."

With QATrax in place, HP has the ability to grow and streamline their test lab operations with the confidence that it will be able to evolve as business needs change.