



# Stonebranch Universal Automation Center

## Review From A Customer



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## Review by a Real User

Verified by IT Central Station



Systems Programmer II at a insurance company with 501-1,000 employees

**Mike Booher**

### **WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?**

We use it for enterprise scheduling and workload automation. For the most part, it runs our internal mainframe batch jobs and does file transfer processes in and outside the company.

### **HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?**

Since we put in Stonebranch, compared to our older scheduler and systems, we've had better visibility, better alerting, better restart-ability, and better retry-ability. For instance, if a file transfer fails and it doesn't send, we can tell it to try 30 minutes later, and that reduces manual intervention for a once-and-done type of failure. The Stonebranch Marketplace has been helpful. We've obtained a few items from there and have started to implement them. In terms of our company's digital transformation, it's definitely become a central component of our processing and our workflows. It's allowed us to integrate disparate systems into this system, so we can monitor and schedule activities on those servers. We have also saved on the licensing cost, although I don't know how much compared to our old product. The way it runs our workflows has saved people-time. If something fails and we don't necessarily have to intervene, we can take another pass at it within the scheduler and do automation in that situation. It takes away from manual intervention which would take time. There's a soft benefit there. It has saved us about ten hours a week, depending upon who had to field the issue.

### **WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?**

The ability to monitor tasks that are on the open-system side as well as our mainframe side gives us a one-window view of all our processes. I love the Universal Controller. It's been great for us. We host it on-premise. It resides here on their own servers within our network, within the company. It's High Availability, meaning there's failover from one server to the other if one goes down. The Stonebranch Universal Task is very flexible. There are many different tasks that are available for use.

### **WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?**

Usually, when there's something that I need from them, I put in a request for an enhancement. It typically takes a few months, but they deliver. For instance, I have a request regarding our agent on the mainframe. It may time out when communicating to the Universal Controller, when the mainframe is extremely busy. That can cause a task which is running at that time to not see the results of the job that ran on the mainframe. It happens sporadically during times of really busy CPU usage. We're expecting that enhancement from them in the fourth quarter.



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#### **FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?**

In August it will be our three-year anniversary of using this solution.

#### **WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?**

The solution is very resilient. You have multiple agents and you have High Availability, so we're able to do maintenance to one server without affecting its availability. It's been rock-solid for us.

#### **WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?**

It's very scalable. You can run as many agents as you need, depending upon how many servers you're monitoring or integrating into it. We're running about 10,000 tasks every day. I've heard of other companies doing hundreds of thousands. I'm not concerned about scalability. Usage is increasing at a steady rate. It's heavily used. It's a very integral piece of our batch processing daily.

#### **HOW ARE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?**

I typically communicate with them a couple of times a year if I have an issue. They have a good helpdesk process and ticketing process that work very well. Tech support is excellent.

#### **IF YOU PREVIOUSLY USED A DIFFERENT SOLUTION, WHICH ONE DID YOU USE AND WHY DID YOU SWITCH?**

We used a product from ASG. It was their Beta 42 solution. It's something that they purchased and it was pretty old. It ran on the mainframe. It just didn't give us the flexibility we needed to do enterprise-wide and to be able to integrate server tasks or open-systems tasks with the mainframe. Stonebranch replaced our old, mainframe scheduler, and we got much more flexibility in the new product, compared to the old product. Our file transfer processes are much more resilient. And one of the biggest benefits is that when a job fails it sends an email to us and alerts us about the failure. In addition, it sends it to our ticketing system and it opens up a problem ticket automatically.

#### **HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?**

Setup and installation are pretty easy. Converting from an old scheduler to a new one with all of the nuances of scheduling-criteria was a challenge. We used their Hired Services to help us do that. In terms of the testing process, we were able to test during the next three months and we were able to run in parallel. By executing the Stonebranch version of the scheduler, we were pointing to dummy jobs but we were able to basically parallel our mainframe scheduler. That enabled us to make sure things were kicking off at the right times and in sync. That was something I did, not something that they did. That really helped us get a comfort level that everything was going to kick off properly, in the right order, and the right times. By doing that parallel running, we were able to resolve a lot of potential problems. It was about a four- to five-month engagement for the conversion.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM?**

We used Stonebranch people to do it. It went very well. They were very helpful.



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### **WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?**

I don't have pricing information, but I do know it's cheaper than our old legacy system. Other than the standard licensing fees there are no additional costs.

### **WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?**

We looked at a few automation schedulers. The long-term direction is that we're looking at a ten-to-15-year plan to migrate off the mainframe. It made sense to get an enterprise solution that was open-systems based. That's what Stonebranch brought to us.

### **WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?**

Try it out, get to know the product and see how it works. We have two system admins or schedulers, master schedulers, me and my co-worker. In our test and dev environment, we have four staff involved, counting me and my co-worker. Since everything was cut over to production and stabilized, we have had to spend about ten hours a week on it. We have operators monitoring it 24/7. I would rate it at nine out of ten. I work with it every day and it does what I need it to do. I can't think of anything off the top of my head that I need as an enhancement at the moment.

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