iMacros Software Fills in the Data for Civica's Public Sector Customers

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CASE STUDY

CIVICA

British-based Civica's 2,100 employees help more than 750,000 public sector professionals in the UK, Australia and New Zealand do their jobs with renewed efficiency, with software that streamlines service delivery by local authority, police and fire services, schools, libraries and dozens of other parts of the public sector.

Civica Automation offers breakthrough levels of automation to clients via a powerful data consolidation tool. With this tool, departments are automating tasks such as extracting information from .pdf files, SAP Crystal reports, and SQL queries against a database and then consolidating the data into multiple vendors' applications — all across thousands of locations.

Because of government austerity measures driven by one of the longest world-wide economic recessions in generations, Civica's highly automated software and service solutions provide a welcome answer for public sector departments who struggle to maintain service levels within tight funding restrictions.

To complement Civica's technology, the company partnered with iMacros to provide scripting capability for Web-scraping rapidly changing data, such as currency conversion rates from a Web site or banking data available only through secure Internet portals. The sheer complexity of the steps required to access Internet sites, sign in, manually acquire specific information use this to populate databases made Web-scraping the one essential function that stubbornly resisted automation.

Building a web-scraping script in-house

Civica felt that an automated web-scraping software component was a valuable addition to the tool. Civica Automation's General Manager, Richard Brabrook, decided it would be better to find a time-tested commercial alternative that could be implemented more quickly and operate reliably out of the box.

Several tools were considered, including Selenium®, a browser automation system; Windows and Web recorders like WinParrot® and WinAutomation; and automatic testing software packages TestComplete and Ranorex® Studio. Brabrook's team also looked at Automation Anywhere and WinTask. "We needed simplicity of use and access via Microsoft Component Model technologies (COM)." However, none of these approaches delivered precisely what Brabrook was looking for, including an all-important ease of use.

iMacros found and tested

After a thorough evaluation, Civica selected Ipswitch's iMacros software. The process showed that iMacros could do the job and was easy to use.

To build a script for automatic execution within Civica software, iMacros records the keystrokes for activities such as accessing data from various regulatory web sites. While iMacros' recording capability is not embedded into the Civica's Automation Techniques software, when a customer clicks on button to embed a script, it automatically fires up iMacros to record all the steps a user takes, then builds the script of the HTML it's producing to enable web-scraping. When iMacros has built and saved the script, the script is automatically copied back into Civica software, which uses it as an automation piece.

Brabrook is impressed with iMacros ability to automate a constantly repeated function that didn't seem to lend itself to automation. "iMacros allows us to do managed downloads like BACS reports of electronic processing of financial debit and credit transactions and handle complex interactions such as credential password change on-demand, anti-bot measures such as requesting variable character positions from password and more."

Scripts are encrypted

Because iMacros output is fully encrypted, passwords built into the script can't be picked up by prying eyes. Scripts can be easily adapted to circumstances users encounter, and if customers want to develop their own scripts, they can buy iMacros from Civica and do things themselves.The new solution has already been put to the test: shortly after implementation there was a power failure in a network cabinet that affected two switches with eight connected access points. "No timeconsuming fault diagnosis was needed. WhatsUp Gold showed us where the problem was straight away. We were able to respond so quickly that the staff barely noticed that anything was happening."

Performance monitoring too

iMacros also helps track performance to ensure the scripts are run within a specified timeframe. It runs a query against a database and measures the response time. The data is then exported to a reporting application that charts the results, shown here:
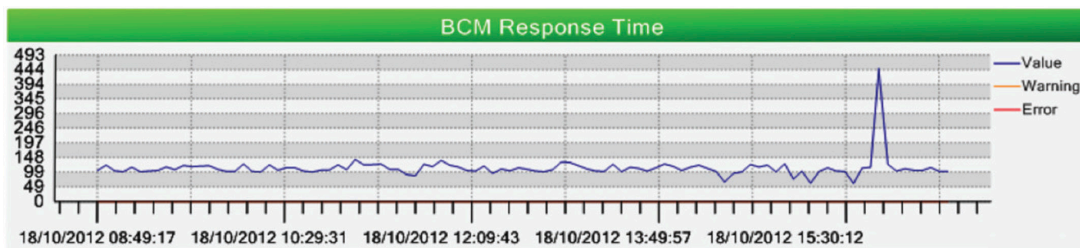
"We can take timings to see how long each script takes to execute and plot response rates over time. This feature was used recently by one of our city clients when citizens were complaining that it took too long to book tickets at a local theatre. iMacros made it easy to track the cause to poor performance by the current payment gateway provider, who was promptly replaced."

To learn more about iMacros, please visit:
www.progress.com/imacros

About Progress

Progress creates leading platforms for developing high-impact business applications. Progress offers powerful tools for building adaptive user experiences across any touchpoint, a cloud-native app dev platform to deliver modern apps, leading data connectivity technology, web content management, business rules, secure file transfer and network monitoring. Over 1,700 independent software vendors, 100,000 enterprise customers and two million developers rely on Progress. Learn about Progress at www.progress.com or +1-800-477-6473.

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