



A Thirst for Efficiency: Trinks Enlists CCSS for Effective Systems Management

One of Germany's leading beverage distribution companies, Trinks can attribute much of its success today to the wealth of experience gained over the course of a 275 year history and an unfailing ability to adapt to the challenges and demands of the industry. At the heart of the Trinks business, which this year projects a EUR 1.0 billion turnover, lies a commitment to uphold the best standards of service to their loyal nationwide customer base in the food and retail industries. To help the company to meet this commitment, Trinks employs a network of centrally controlled IBM System i servers that are managed with QSystem Monitor, QMessage Monitor and QRemote Control, the leading trilogy of solutions developed by the IBM systems management specialist, CCSS.

The systems environment is located at the Trinks HQ in Goslar where a hardworking team of five people manage the day-to-day system demands in overlapping shifts. The System i machines support a number of business critical applications including LFS 400, the warehouse management system, DCW/SAP for financial accounting, beverage industry specific applications, iTera for High Availability (HA) and a host of others that have been extended and extensively customised to suit the specific needs of the Trinks environment.

The Trinks team describes the CCSS solutions as integral to their daily management of the network and the applications that run on it; as one member said, 'QSystem Monitor and QMessage Monitor give us a great deal of visibility over the systems. We are able to easily identify any issues that could have an impact on performance, the applications themselves or the systems' availability for our employees.' The direct user community supported by

the team includes approximately 600-700 laptops and PC's connecting to the iSeries in addition to 200 PC's that are integrated in their forklifts vehicles across the 16 national distribution centres.

The distribution centres play a key role in the time-sensitive business operations with up to 100,000 sales units being shipped from each of the centers every day. Active communications between the forklift operators and the iSeries is extremely important for workflow processes. The systems team at Goslar is able to detect, using QSystem Monitor, any break in communication – for example, a dropped WiFi link – which could present the forklift operators with re-connection problems if their session was not closed and effectively leave the application in a frozen state for that user. Until the problem is resolved, shipment details cannot be sent to the forklift operators within the distribution centres, nor can they send confirmation of dispatch consignments to the server.



The systems team have set up the CCSS solutions to monitor the issue in real-time and respond by terminating that session when communication fails, allowing the forklift operators to rapidly reconnect with a minimum of disruption to their workflow. ‘This capability is extremely useful,’ said one of the system administrators, ‘it makes all the difference between those shipments leaving on time and the forklift operator being delayed which could result in lorries queuing up at the ramp. CCSS solutions give us access to those types of insights without any delay, and the ability to resolve them without time-consuming investigations – for a logistics business, the value is immediate.’

In addition to using QSystem Monitor for real-time communication monitoring, Trinks also makes use of the solution in relation to their most important jobs which are run on the iSeries portion of the LFS (warehousing) application. The two most essential considerations of these particular jobs are the CPU levels and their run-time as problems in either case could create the follow-on consequence of delays to their distribution centres and impact their fleet’s schedules for pick ups and deliveries. Important jobs can be monitored using CCSS’s MONCHKJCP command which runs in the background and keeps an eye on potentially problematic jobs (or jobs that would cause substantial issues if problems went undetected). The team at Trinks can use this command to check the CPU usage of the job and then configure the appropriate automated response e.g. hold, lower its priority or take no action. The CPU level at which any action should be taken can be defined for each job, as can the inclusion or exclusion of generics or users, making it a highly relevant command for individual requirements.

Jobs that become inactive or those that breach their scheduled or anticipated run times can be identified in real-time and brought to the team’s attention through a choice of alerts for fast resolution. Any spikes in CPU or response time can be identified in the short term history and the team can quickly identify all the jobs running at that time to pinpoint the cause of the problem and work with the right job immediately: ‘It’s a very fast route to the cause of any issue and diminishes the time we might otherwise have to spend investigating the problem,’ said a Trinks system operator.

QMessage Monitor greatly reduces the workload for the team at Trinks by filtering and automatically responding to the majority of non-urgent system generated messages and alerting the team to only those urgent messages that require further decisions or action to be taken. ‘The CCSS solutions bring together a huge amount of information, collected from virtually every system component across a number of systems, but it’s never overwhelming due to the centralised management, filtering and automation,’ said a member of the team, ‘we need only concern ourselves with any message or element that is not performing as it should. It’s very efficient and allows us to be more productive and pro-active in our daily work. Without these solutions we simply wouldn’t be able to manually monitor and achieve the levels of availability we currently do – and certainly not with a small team.’

The process of message notification assists the team in their drive for efficiency. Critical messages are already identified and when they are issued, that notification occurs in real-time. For each urgent message an escalation procedure can be created and attached to that message, pushing it to the correct person, via the correct communication device or channel according to availability. Messages with the highest priority such as those issued in a disaster scenario, or those that occur out-of-hours (Trinks operates a 24/6 environment) can be sent using QRemote Control.

This allows the on-call team to respond directly from their mobile phone to resolve the issue by sending a secure command or response directly back to the server. In this way, QRemote Control eliminates the cost and inconvenience of having members of the team situated on-site at all times without compromising the company’s need to respond immediately to any unforeseen events, regardless of when they may occur. By utilising the CCSS solutions to successfully carry out a pro-active approach to systems management, Trinks seems set to retain their status as an industry leader with a thirst for efficiency.

