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NEC

Job Management Tool for AWS Environment

Ricoh Japan Corporation

RICOH

Cost cuts of approximately 20%, improved services, and expansion of cloud business achieved through improved efficiency of cloud services for customers

Customer

- Ricoh Japan Corporation

Challenges

- The need to install Ricoh Japan's internally developed tool on the servers of each customer made it difficult to reduce service costs.
- AWS functions evolved rapidly, requiring regular upgrades to Ricoh Japan's tool. This led to increased workloads and costs.
- Management processes increased for customers, causing a heavier management burden and dependence on experts.

Solution

- JobCenter automatically executes routine jobs such as snapshot creation and start/stop of EC2 instances based on schedule.
- Job status is monitored with a Managed Service Center, and notifications of abnormalities are sent automatically by email to the center, which enables management staff to respond immediately.

Results

- The costs of providing Ricoh Japan's service were reduced by approximately 20%, enabling cost reductions to be passed on to customers.
- Further development of Ricoh Japan's internally developed tool became unnecessary, leveling out expenditures and eliminating development risks.
- The easily understandable GUI allowed the configuration of settings for multiple servers and eliminated setting errors. This increased the efficiency of status monitoring and other jobs, thereby improving operation quality.

Introduction

Ricoh Japan Corp. was established in 1959 and is an all-round vendor providing solutions for management and operational issues in a variety of businesses. The company also sells solutions for ICT products such as multifunction machines and printers, and engages in system integration and software design, development, and the provision of support and services.

Ricoh Japan offers "Managed Service for AWS™." Previously, Ricoh Japan used an internally developed management tool to operate it, but encountered a significant number of issues. With a rising number of customers migrating to the cloud, Ricoh Japan has been endeavoring to make fundamental improvements to their management environment.

Challenges

The costs of developing, operating, and managing internally developed management tools for the AWS environment were becoming a growing burden.

Ricoh Japan was using an internally developed tool for its "Managed Service for AWS," but had numerous problems.

"Constant improvements to the functions of our tool were necessary to respond in a timely manner to rapid developments in AWS functionality. But keeping up with the changes required large investments in development," said Koutaro Okada from the ICT Office at Ricoh Japan.

Because Ricoh Japan's internally developed tool was installed on the servers of each customer, operational costs were borne by the customers. In addition, management processes increased linearly with an increase in the number of servers. This added to the operational burden. Notifications of job execution results from the tool were also difficult to decipher and required highly skilled staff to handle them.
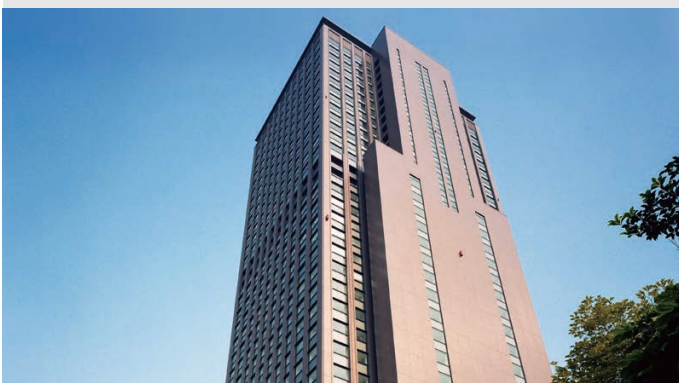
"We became reliant on our expert staff to decipher email alarms," said Akihiro Nishiaki from the Managed Operations Division at Ricoh Japan. "Whenever a problem occurred, we couldn't solve it without consulting the developers first, which made us dependent on them," added Tateki Hosoda, Leader of the System Operations Group in the Managed Operations Division.

Solution

NEC's appealing solution eliminated development costs, and provided solid support and a sense of partnership.

Before installing NEC's JobCenter, which is a job management tool, Ricoh Japan considered and compared the job management tools of other vendors. However, there were few vendors offering a tool capable of providing long-term, stable, high-quality service. NEC's performance record and reliability were also important factors in the decision to go with JobCenter. Additionally, Ricoh Japan had previously collaborated with NEC, so the relationship resembled an in-house partnership.

"We heard that NEC uses JobCenter internally and is regularly making improvements and enhancing the tool, so we believed it would offer quality suitable for our operational needs," said Jihei Mori, Managed Operations Division Chief at Ricoh Japan.

Another important deciding factor was that the cost of installing JobCenter was significantly lower than the cost of internally developing management tools, making it possible to pass cost savings on to customers.

"JobCenter has an excellent graphical user interface (GUI), so it is very easy to operate," said Mr. Nishiaki. "Moreover, during installation, the NEC staff provided support and worked closely with us as a team." Installation began in mid-September 2016, and the tool was in operation by mid-October. It was a short transition period, taking less than a week to cut over once the system was designed and the construction phase began. NEC also held a hands-on seminar on JobCenter. In addition, transition was smooth and secure due to the coaching provided by the seminar instructors to facilitate the learning process. The tool was first used for a customer's system in December 2016.

"We are billed on a monthly basis in accordance with the growth of the business, which reduces risk for us," explained Mr. Okada. "It is also a major benefit to be able to work with NEC toward the common goal of achieving business growth."

Results

Internal costs were cut by approximately 20%, leading to the creation of new services and business growth.

By implementing JobCenter, internal service costs were reduced by about 20%. This enabled a new pricing menu to be adopted and for cost savings to be passed on to customers.

"JobCenter can control multiple servers from a single machine and enables effective use of AWS tag functions, which significantly reduces installation and implementation costs," remarked Arisa Kake from the ICT Office at Ricoh Japan.

In terms of management, errors due to schedule changes, etc., were eliminated via the JobCenter's GUI environment. Additionally, JobCenter enables the user to immediately determine the operation and backup status of the servers. This led to improved operation quality due to better server monitoring.

"Training was needed to implement the previous tool, but JobCenter can be used intuitively, thus eliminating training costs," stated Mr. Hosoda. "Even after installation, we were able to consult with NEC about operations. NEC not only provided product support but also worked with us closely over the entire project," reported Ms. Kake.

Ricoh Japan has decided to look into expanding the implementation of JobCenter. "We greatly look forward to seeing even more developments in JobCenter's functions," commented Mr. Mori.
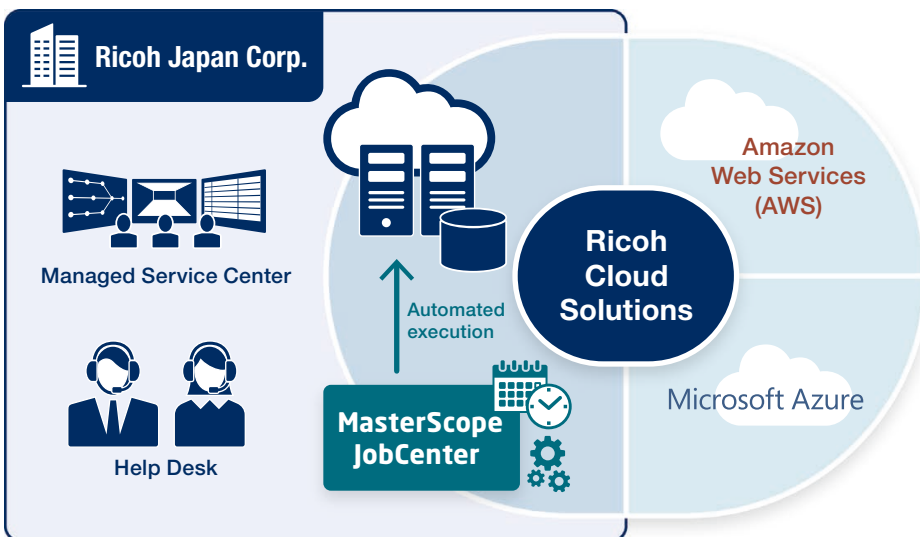
Ricoh Japan Corp. uses JobCenter to automatically carry out routine jobs such as snapshot creation and start/stop of EC2 instances based on schedule.