newsletter

PGCG
Pretty Good Consulting Group
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EOM News and Views
Issue 4, August 2008

Keyword substitution in File Masks

Using EOM's Keyword substitution feature in your File Masks reduces the number of File Masks and saves you time.

There are features, options, and capabilities that many EOM users have never heard about. One such feature is the ability to use keyword substitution in the File Mask configuration. "Keyword substitution" is simply using "live", current job/file, values in EOM configuration property values. In this case EOM configuration properties include keywords that are dynamically replaced when the EOM configuration is used when handling a job or file. For example, a keyword substitution in a Custom Job "Arguments for command line" parameter for the Custom Job "Notepad.exe" would be: <PCFILENAME> This tells EOM to run the program Notepad.exe and pass the incoming file name string as the first parameter. So, if an incoming filename was "c:\FTP\MonthlyStatement.txt", the Custom Job execution would be: "Notepad.exe c:\FTP\MonthlyStatement.txt"

O.k., what does this have to do with File Masking? You can use keyword substitutions in Job Properties! For example, instead of selecting a Print Attribute from the drop-down list a Print Job, you can type in the keyword (enclosed in < >):

Print Attribute: <DAY> which would use the Print Attribute "MONDAY" if it was Monday, "TUESDAY" if it was Tuesday, ...
or
Print Attribute: <HOSTQUEUE> which would use the value passed from the remote system for Host Queue (a.k.a. Destination) for the Print Attribute.

Keyword substitution allows you to use parts of keywords, concatenate keywords, and even add your own text. For example:

Print Attribute PA-<MONTH 1 3>Statement<YEAR 3 2> would assemble a string for a Print Attribute "PA-AUGStatement08" if the File Mask had a Print Job defined with this Print Attribute value.

But there is more! You can define sets of keyword substitution strings, where EOM traverses the set of strings until the first set member matches a defined property. Suppose you have 5 Physical Printers defined: Execs, Execs-CEO, Execs-CIO, Execs-CFO, Execs-COO. Your File Mask, Print Job Printer property could be "Execs-<RUNID>", but what happens if someone from accounting prints to the Execs printer? (no printer named Execs-Accountant) So you may want to guard against an undefined value by allowing for multiple values and a default if there isn't a match: "Execs-<RUNID> | Execs". The pipe character "|" is used to separate multiple keyword substitutions. Starting from the left, the first syntax to find a defined value is used. So, this one File Mask can handle files from multiple RUNIDs, routing to the correct printer dynamically. Note that if the keyword substitution does not resolve to a valid attribute then an alert is issued and no jobs are created.

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DDA Feature *(you may not know about)*

How do I submit data to a DDA?
How can the operator enter a starting check#?
Is there a way to password protect a DDA?

Yes - to all questions, using the same DDA Command "Get User Input". The "Get User Input" command stops the Print Job and DDA executing until there is some human response to the command. As of EOM 7.0 and later, the human response is via the Alert Explorer, unless you are in Print Preview, in which case a message box is displayed on the Print Preview window. When the Get User Input command is executed while processing the output stream, an Alert is created with severity Major, with Alert text of "User input required for print job to continue". The "User input prompt" value of the Get User Input command is displayed when someone attempts to clear the alert via the EOM client. A user-defined variable is set to the user input, your DDA processes that text as needed (validation of the user input is a good idea ☺).

```
DDA Item:  GetPassword
  Commands:
     Get User Input
        Input variable         StrVar
        User Input Prompt   Enter password
        Hide Input              Yes
     Convert Variable    StrVar   {Remove spaces}
     If StrVar Not Equal RunTimePassword
       {ask again via another Get User Input}
       If StrVar Not Equal RunTimePassword
         Set Variable Text "Invalid password"
         Display Variable   Text   {in Log}
         End Report
```

How do I ...?

This section of the newsletter will discuss solutions to questions that come from real customers trying to solve real problems. Last month we looked at backing up the EOM configuration. Now lets look at a few options on EOM server backup/disaster recovery strategies.

Disaster strikes!!! Act of God or act of the newbie tech, you better have a plan on how to reestablish your output management environment. In general there are bigger issues than EOM to deal with if there is a major disaster but, if you are prepared, getting EOM back up will be quick and relatively painless. Since you faithfully read the EOM Newsletter (last month's discussion on backing up the EOM configuration) we will start by assuming you have current EOM configurations. What follows is a high-level view of backup/disaster recovery, clearly there are numerous variables to consider based on your site's operation.

No matter what strategy you use for backup/disaster recovery, there are basic elements you need to address:

Server hardware - Do you have the hardware to bring up EOM? Virtualized space?
Server operating system - During a disaster is not the time to go looking for system software.
Server Service Packs, updates - Ditto
Network connectivity/configuration - Where is your new network, what IP addresses, what directories, what configurations on the host system change?
Windows Print Manager printer environment (including printer drivers) - Yikes! Look at the Microsoft Print Migrator tool.
Additional software (PDF creation, Custom Jobs) - all software you added to process input data/print streams
EOM software - Install CD
EOM Interim Corrections - Latest and greatest ICs to match your current configuration
EOM configuration - As per last month's newsletter: (very) recent backup, command files, Custom Jobs,...
EOM security groups - Do both EOM instances use the same set of Windows Security Roles?

There are multiple implementation options on backup/disaster recovery strategies, for this discussion we with call them "hot/live", "warm", and "cold".

<u>Hot/Live</u>
This architecture keeps all configurations **and** input data/print streams in a fully redundant manner. As data is received from host systems (mainframe, Unix/Linux, Windows, directories,...) the data/print stream is processed on the primary EOM server, but also sent to a secondary EOM server. The copy sent to the secondary server typically creates a Backup Job, held for a time period then automatically removed. The primary requirements for this scenario are:

- Two EOM servers (or 2 separate virtualizations, or one server and one virtualized - EOM runs fine in a virtual server environment by the way)
- Two copies of the EOM software
- Configurations on the primary EOM server that process the data and also send a copy to the secondary server (hey - another good use for the File Mask "Continue Search after match" option. Create a File Mask at the top defined with a Transfer Job, transfer all files to the secondary EOM server).
- Configurations on the secondary EOM server that recognize the input stream is from the primary EOM server and process accordingly. "Accordingly" could be a Backup Job that could be **restored** if needed, held for X days by the File Group. Other input streams should process identically as the primary EOM server.
- Nearly every EOM configuration change requires the identical change on the secondary EOM server. Exporting the changes from the primary EOM server and importing in the secondary EOM server is a snap. When in doubt, export the entire EOM configuration and import (with overwrite) on the secondary server. You might even set up a process where you export the entire EOM configuration to a directory, set up an Directory Monitor Search to watch that directory, pick up the XML file and have a File Mask/Transfer Job send it to the secondary EOM server, where the secondary EOM server receives and copies the file into a directory, from which you manually Import when needed.
- Windows printer change, PDF creation software installation/configuration/registration, directory change, and so on would also require the identical change on the secondary EOM server.
- Even one step further is to configure your ClearPath PrintS destination or SYMQ to have a secondary EOM - if the primary cannot be reached, the EOM host software will automatically connect to the secondary EOM.

How do I ...? (continued)

Warm

The EOM service may not be running, but is ready to go in an emergency. Maybe you have a Disaster Recovery server already identified, or have space on another server in case there is a problem. The EOM software is installed, up to date, and just a matter of starting the EOM service, importing the EOM configuration, and adjusting either a local IP address or the host system configurations to point at the new EOM server. Windows printers, directories, Custom Jobs, and so on are updated on this server as changes are made to the primary EOM server. This scenario is very much like the Hot/Live scenario, except that live files are not sent to the secondary EOM server until there is an emergency.

Cold

O.k., you don't believe in the Hot/Live/Warm scenarios. Fine, just be prepared to sweat a little while you put all of the pieces together. If you have been backing up the entire EOM server then you restore the server and you are running. Or, you run the virtualized server to a new server. If you do not have the whole server backed up, then you must assemble the pieces. If you backed up just the EOM configuration, then you have software to install, configurations to import, peripheral configurations to make (Windows printers, directories,...), and so on. Essentially you have to build the EOM environment from the ground up. One of the more time consuming pieces is reestablishing the Windows Print Manager print configuration. If you dont have the drivers handy it could turn into a long night. You may want to take a look at the Windows Print Migrator tool (click here).

The picture gets a little messier if you have directly connect printers, the CD/DVD creator device, or other single-installation only elements. Clearly, each of those pieces has to have some kind of replacement in the event of a disaster.

EOM Administrator Tool lives!

There's nothing like a sharp customer to put you in your place. A recent site visit corrected my understanding of the EOM Administrator capability with EOM versions 7.0 and later.

What is the "EOM Administrator" you ask? It is a stand-alone GUI application that is used to monitor one or more EOM instances (Note - EOM 7.1 has the new Threshold Monitoring to monitor a single EOM instance). It has its own installation (on the EOM release CD, under "Administrator" folder), its own configuration, and help information in the EOM Help File (Contents / Tools / Administrator Tool). But wait - there is more!!! It can also be used to "poll" MCP and OS2200 EOM communication connections as well as TCP systems and devices that support the LPD/LPR protocol.

The EOM Administrator program has a graphical user interface, so it is run as a Windows application. This program is typically installed in the operations center and/or on the EOM guru's desktop. It has to be running in order to monitor, so many sites put a shortcut into the Windows "Startup" program folder.

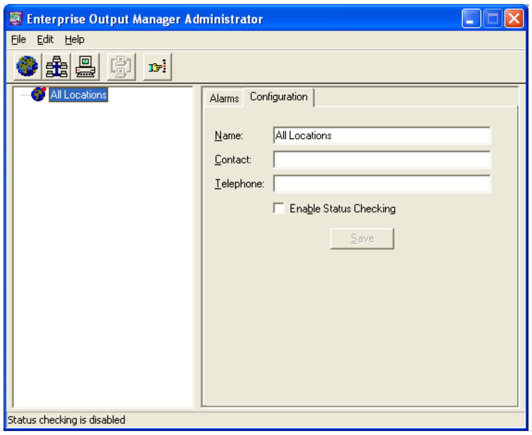
Installation

The EOM Administrator program executes on Windows platforms. The EOM installation CD has a directory titled "Administrator", simply double-click on the setup.exe program and follow the dialog boxes.

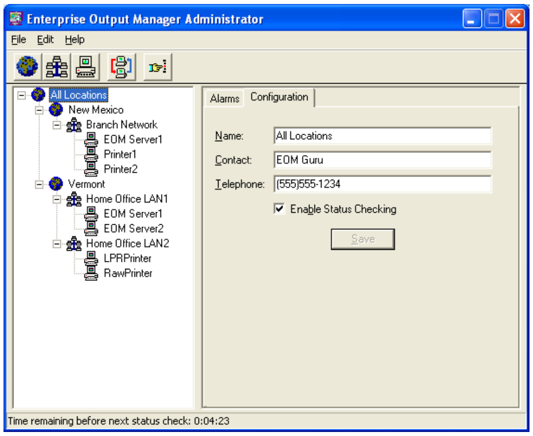
Configuration

You logically group your EOM instances by location and network. This grouping is for your benefit only, but also makes it easy to enable/disable groups of monitored devices. The configuration is built by assembling locations, LANs, and "Agents". Agents are those entities you want to monitor: could be EOM servers, devices that are listening on port 102 (so you could "poll" MCP and OS2200 EOM instances too), and devices that listen on port 515 (LPR Ping), usually printers. You define unique configuration information for each Agent, such as IP address, various thresholds, and the TCP protocol to use to connect to the Agent. The EOM Administrator program creates "Alarms", which are network connectivity or a threshold issues for specific agents.

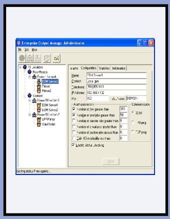
The configuration is empty after the installation:

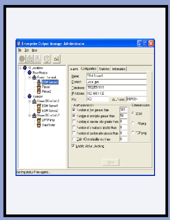


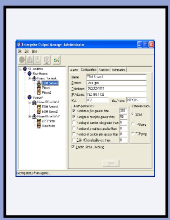
Define locations, LAN segments, and Agents:

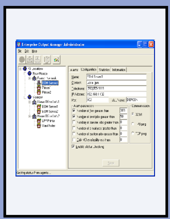


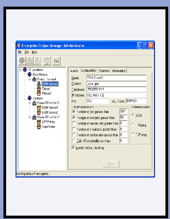
You can set contact information for each of the nodes on the left-hand panel, which is very useful if your operation people need to know whom to contact when an issue arises. Based on your settings for the Agent, an alarm will be set if a threshold is exceeded or if a communications connection cannot be made to the Agent. See Edit / Configuration to modify how often Agents are polled as well as what to do when an alarm is set. You can disable specific Agents by unchecking the "Enable Status Checking" button or disable groups of Agents by unchecking the "Enable Status Checking" on a LAN or Location node.











Upgrade now!

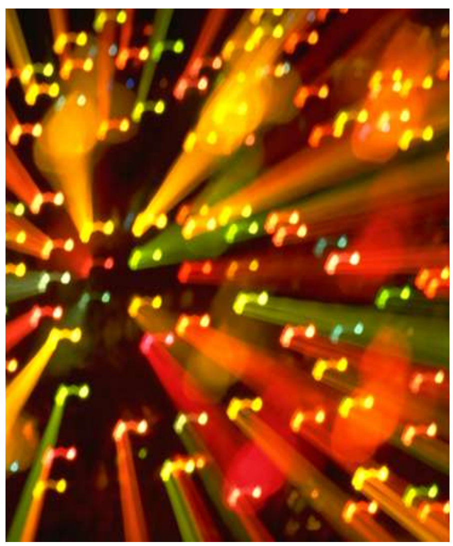
I know, you have heard it before: upgrade the software because the vendor says it is the thing to do. Well, ... they are right in this case. EOM versions 6.1 and below are no longer supported. However, the major reason to upgrade to EOM 7.1 is that the latest and greatest software provides latest and greatest capability -- that you can really use. This is not bells and whistles, this is functionality that increases your productivity and likely reduce cost of output management. In addition, Interim Correction 7.1.6 fixes a significant Windows print driver issue.

Who are we?

Highly skilled, creative, solution provider focused on the Unisys Enterprise Output Manager product (formerly known as DEPCON) with a sense of urgency sums up who we are and what we do. We provide general Enterprise Output Manager consulting, migrations, upgrades, configuration, training, and custom programming.

On-site services, remote services, and general consulting are available now.

Why use PGCG? Deep knowledge of the EOM product integrated into a variety of customer environments sets us apart. Our customers production environment depends on solid, working solutions that we provide.



Quick Hits

So now you know about keyword substitution in File Masks. Did you know that you can use Keyword Substitution in Print Attribute, Web/File Output properties? Backup Job properties too!

Rumor has it that EOM 8.0 is slated to be released sometime in the first quarter of 2009.

If you are looking for a PDF creation tool other than Dane Prairie's WIN2PDF or from Adobe, another provider that has been verified by EOM Development is from Amyuni. See their PDF Converter product, here.

Have a suggestion for "How do I ...?" Write a brief description and send it to SteveD@PrettyGoodConsultingGroup.com for future newsletter discussion.

Interested in EOM training? We can either do custom training on-site or arrange for a formal class through Unisys. Please contact us for details.

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