

Mentor Graphics Automates Distribution List Management



Customer Profile

Oregon-based Mentor Graphics is a \$ 650 million company that offers innovative products and solutions that help engineers overcome the design challenges they face in the increasingly complex worlds of board and chip design.

Business Situation

The company wanted to better control its distribution lists, especially as it brought new departments on board. Mentor Graphics sought to save administrator time and improve its internal customer service by making distribution lists more automated and accurate.

Solution

Mentor Graphics moved to a SmartDL solution from Imanami for more sophisticated distribution list functionality, less hands-on management and faster updates for users, giving the company better productivity from users and administrators alike.

Benefits

- 43 percent reduction in number of support calls to help desk
- Greater management flexibility
- Up-to-date information within 24 hours
- Increased user satisfaction

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Messaging Engineer
Mentor Graphics*

Located in Wilsonville, Oregon, Mentor Graphics® is a world-class research and development company. Founded in 1981, the company has sites in 72 locations worldwide, with approximately 3,500 employees. A technology leader in electronic design automation (EDA), Mentor Graphics provides software and hardware design solutions that enable organizations to send better electronic products to market faster and more cost-effectively.

One of the keys to this company's success is clear communication. Mentor Graphics employees have to be certain that the right information gets to the right people when they need it. An engineer not receiving word about certain code freezes, for example, results in a loss of productivity for the company. To make sure that important news reaches its intended audience, distribution list information must be kept up to date. Enter Imanami.

Past Challenges

Mentor Graphics had already tried a distribution list management application from another company, but the product didn't tier well and was time-consuming to manage. "Every time we needed to add or change something, I had to spend half a day programming," recalls Robert Klohr, Mentor Graphic's Messaging Engineer. Supportability was also an issue. "Only Robert knew the ins and outs of the application," remembers Albert Rogers, Mentor Graphics Exchange Administrator. "And as we started to try more complex distribution lists, the program became even more painful to use."

Part of the problem was that the company could not simultaneously update and use distribution lists. The help desk could not look at the lists while administrators were updating them and had to wait until the changes were complete.

The Ultimate in Flexibility

"This product has given us so much flexibility to map our distribution lists to our own business," says Klohr. "We can easily exclude people from our queries so users aren't bothered by mail that doesn't pertain to them. For instance, we make it a practice to exclude our president from our global lists so he can focus on the mail that he needs to attend to directly. We know he will be made aware of anything significant because he has his own staff for that."

Because SmartDL is not hard coded, Mentor Graphics can literally tell it which fields or custom attributes to use. "Imanami didn't make any assumptions about how a company would use the product," notes Klohr. "They let me really tailor the solution, opening up or ratcheting back the choices available based on our needs."

Additional Impacts

One of SmartDL's smaller features has made a big difference in the lives of Mentor Graphics administrators. "In SmartDL, the templates alert us about whether or not a list is scripted," explains Rogers. "We automatically know if we should manually update, or just let the script run. I know this is a minor thing, but it's great to have the script alert already set for us, out of the box."

Another automated function that saves time is that any directory change is automatically mirrored in the company's distribution lists. "This certainly removes the potential for human error," remarks Klohr. "Any extra spaces or misspellings in the course of data entry can really cause delays, but automating directory changes helps us know that they are properly reflected in a time-sensitive way." These SmartDL features save significant administrator and help desk time and give them a productivity edge. "We have eliminated approximately 15 calls each week, which translates into a 43 percent reduction," reveals Rogers. "Now I can focus on my other tasks without constantly responding to the same issues over and over again."

Greater Efficiency Companywide

For users, the most important benefit of SmartDL is that it makes sure that they get crucial information when they need it. "In our company, it's pretty serious if certain information doesn't reach the right people," says Klohr. "If a user doesn't know about some scheduled system maintenance, for example, he could lose a lot of work unnecessarily. Not getting information definitely affects productivity."

The company also uses its distribution lists to keep employees abreast of personnel changes across the company. Any change to director- or vice president-level employees results in a global email because, as Klohr puts it, "although a company of this size can change often, it's important for all employees to stay current since these changes can really affect the way we do business."

Because Mentor Graphics is a growing company that recently acquired three other organizations, new and existing users find themselves moving from one team or location to another. It is essential that their mail follows them as they make these changes. To make sure this happens in a timely manner, administrators set SmartDL to update daily, so that directory information changes will be reflected within 24 hours of the user's move. "Our users are getting more accurate information in near real time," says Rogers. "We have configured SmartDL to run at 6 a.m., which is just after all the updates are automatically made to our other systems, so all changes are already in the SmartDL system when our corporate campus starts its day."

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Greater Stability

"The single biggest reason for us to switch to SmartDL was to gain user confidence," states Klohr. "We were losing credibility with our own internal customers, and we immediately turned that around with SmartDL." Since the product's installation, user satisfaction is way up. Users who send broadcast lists are saving time because the lists are accurate, and they no longer have to worry about whether their messages are getting through. "Because we didn't have error reporting capabilities in the past, users who had been burned before would repeatedly check with the help desk to confirm that their lists were actually updated," recounts Rogers. "Now, the system has demonstrated that the right mail is getting to the right people."

Future Plans

Now that Mentor Graphics has both SmartDL and WebDir in place, decision makers are looking for other ways to save administrator time and optimize their current technology resources. The company is planning an upgrade to Exchange 2000, and SmartDL will move with it. "When I implement Exchange 2000, nobody will see the difference in terms of the way they handle their business. Users will still have the same single tool and won't have to relearn anything."

Concludes Klohr, "I am confident that our investment in SmartDL will serve Mentor Graphics well as our system grows and changes. Our relationship with Imanami has certainly turned out to be beneficial for everyone."

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