

# Ameritas

## Seamless Migration: How Ameritas Leveled Up with OpCon

### THE CHALLENGE

Always on the lookout to improve its technology solutions, Ameritas was looking to upgrade its long-time job scheduling software solution. Although the software adequately served the insurance provider's needs, service standards had begun to decline in recent years, and Ameritas' executives decided it was time for a change.

**Ameritas sought a holistic workload automation solution that could be rapidly and seamlessly migrated from their prior job scheduling software, without any hiccups.**

In addition, Ameritas needed improved flexibility and visibility into their operations, through superior, faster workload automation. Most importantly, given their complexity of operations and continuously evolving business lines, it was essential that Ameritas would have the support of a world-class, client-first service team.

Once Ameritas decided the time was right to move on from their long-time job scheduling vendor, it conducted robust due diligence into several of the biggest players in the workload automation market. Although Ameritas was very impressed with SMA's product and demos, it faced a complex migration project and had recently spent 18 months on a failed conversion. Naturally, executives were cautious and initially chose a larger, better-known firm that had experience in conducting migration projects off Ameritas' current scheduling software.



One of the largest insurance holding companies in the country.

- Headquartered: Lincoln, NE
- Serves 4.9 million customers nationwide

**"I am not exaggerating when I say this migration was the most positive I have been involved with in forty years."**

*-Ed Watson, Systems Programmer, Ameritas*

“SMA originally lost the bid,” says Ed Watson, Systems Programmer at Ameritas. “But when the other solution provider proved difficult to work with, we decided to come back to OpCon. With 20/20 hindsight, it was the best decision.”

“We had two projects going on at the same time,” says Deb Brugman, Manager of the Operations Team at Ameritas. “Including migrating our database from a Windows to a Linux environment. If we hadn’t converted to SMA, the financial impact would have been significant because we would have had to purchase additional licenses from the scheduler. The move to OpCon was very timely and enabled our team’s success.”

SMA promised to complete the migration project within six months. At first, having recently experienced an 18-month migration project that ultimately failed, Ameritas executives were skeptical. But SMA delivered on their promise.

**“In six months, we were done, which was impressive,” Watson says. “Looking back, we were a little cautious, but it turned out great.”**

Post-migration, Ameritas staff immediately noticed the differences between OpCon and their prior solution.

“We like that OpCon is server based, given that jobs are moving off the mainframe,” says Tony Reilman, Enterprise Solution Manager at Ameritas. “We also like the fact that OpCon can run as a web app. But the biggest factor has been the people – the SMA team are very easy to work with.”

## THE RESULT

**Ameritas’ deployment of the OpCon workload automation solution has translated into the following beneficial and measurable results:**

**LESS DOWNTIME** - OpCon is designed to run on dedicated servers, so your jobs can run even when the mainframe is down or undergoing routine maintenance. “With [our prior scheduling solution], if we had to take the mainframe down, all our agents stopped running,” Brugman says. “With OpCon, if we need to conduct routine maintenance, our agents continue to run on their own, because they work independently from the mainframe.”

**BETTER REPORTING** - Since it is built on a powerful SQL database, OpCon offers a virtually unlimited range of customized reporting to meet any organization’s unique needs. “The fact that OpCon is a SQL database opens up a world of possibilities for us,” Watson says. “Reporting will be a lot easier in the long run than it was with [our prior scheduler], which only offered a few canned reports but little customization.”

**“With OpCon, we have the capability to schedule across all environments: in the cloud, on servers, and on the mainframe. Now, we’ve got the software in place, and we’re ready to start scheduling. We’re ready to start moving forward.”**

*-Deb Brugman, Manager of the Operations Team at Ameritas*

**CENTRALIZED CONTROL** - SMA's enterprise workload automation and orchestration solution enables organizations of any size to manage highly complex environments from a single, central source of truth.

"Without licensing restrictions, we are empowered to put OpCon agents anywhere," Reilman says. "We've added more agents with OpCon than we did over the previous 10 years that I've worked here. It's exciting to see how we can control more of our operations from a central location – OpCon."

**GREATER SIMPLICITY** - OpCon delivers fast, easy automation without exhaustive training or specialized coding skills. SMA's Self Service Interface was designed specifically for business users to help reduce the load on the IT department.

"OpCon's schedule build feature is incredibly simple to use," says Kenneth Bush. "It's just a matter of holding one cycle and adding a schedule build, and we're off and running. Even our programmers praise OpCon's 'wizardry.'"

**LICENSING FLEXIBILITY** - With OpCon, there are no hidden costs.

"One of the big differences we see between our former vendor and OpCon is that if we wanted to add an agent previously, that was an extra cost," Brugman says. "So, we tended to shy away from adding agents. Now, if we need another server, we have processes set up to add one, and the sky's the limit with what we can accomplish!"

**DIRECT MONITORING OF JOBS** - With their prior solution, Ameritas couldn't manage file arrival jobs, such as the creation of a file within a Windows folder. Now, with OpCon they can, allowing them to cut out the middleman and reduce staff resources devoted to such activities.

## CONCLUSION

With OpCon from SMA Technologies, Ameritas is enjoying the flexibility and scalability of an enterprise-level workload orchestration platform, without the complexity. Just as importantly, Ameritas gets ongoing, caring support from a team of experts.

"With so many businesses now, you don't receive the personal touch. SMA was more insistent on being onsite for the cut over date than we were. Now, we continue to meet monthly with the same people who helped us with the conversion and who really know our system."

*-Deb Brugman, Manager of the Operations Team at Ameritas*