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Statement on Word / Excel Flobot usage for high volume printing and document assembly

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The Ultimus Word Flobot and Excel Flobot are very convenient, easy-to-use, and relatively low-cost tools for customers to create and print documents as a part of the Ultimus processes. These Flobots have the other big advantage that documents can be authored using the full capabilities of the native Microsoft Office applications, which is the most widely used authoring tool in the world. It is easy for Ultimus users to create documents as a part of a business process, and has therefore become two of the most widely used Flobots in Ultimus BPM Suite.

While the Ultimus Word Flobot and Ultimus Excel Flobot are excellent tools for what they do, there are limitations to these Flobots when used as a high-volume document assembly and print engine. The time needed for these Flobots to run is often more time compared to other Ultimus Flobots. Because of this execution time, customers should consider when to use these and when to use other print/document creation technologies. The following usage examples are cases where the Ultimus Word Flobot and Ultimus Excel Flobot are not the ideal print options to use in an Ultimus workflow:

1. An Ultimus workflow process is being used to process a high volume of tax reconciliation and reporting documents. For a single workflow process incident, there are a number of Word and Excel documents to be processed as a single batch. In any given day, thousands of batches would be processed resulting in print jobs for literally tens of thousands of documents. In this example, the Ultimus Word and Excel Flobots are being used as a high volume print engine.

2. An Ultimus workflow process is being used to process a high volume of insurance claims and respond to customers and vendors. The workflow process is designed to have several Junction steps that branch to ten parallel flows with each flow containing a Word Flobot. As such, ten Ultimus Word Flobots will execute in parallel to print all the documents required for a claim. In this example, the Ultimus Word Flobot is being used for document assembly.

3. An Ultimus workflow process is being used to print medical forms via a Word Flobot on a number of printers located throughout the customer's office. Each printer in the office space was represented by an Ultimus FloStation on the local user's computers, and eventually the number of Ultimus FloStations totaled more than 30. Because each FloStation queried the Ultimus BPM Server for active Flobot tasks to process, each set on a 5 second interval, the Ultimus FloStation load on the Ultimus BPM Server affected non-FloStation BPM Server executions. In this example, the Ultimus Word Flobot is being used as a high volume print engine. More information regarding this situation has been documented in the Ultimus KnowledgeBase under STD100409.

It may seem that these scenarios resemble logical and useful ways to use the Ultimus Word Flobot and Ultimus Excel Flobot, but there are important factors that must be considered:

1. The Ultimus BPM Suite is optimized for business process management. It is not marketed as a high volume document assembly or print engine.

2. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel are not designed as high volume print engines. They are desktop applications designed for a single user. They are not server applications for back office printing or document creation.

3. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel are heavy, monolithic applications with large footprints. Even though the Ultimus Word Flobot and Ultimus Excel Flobot require only a fraction of Microsoft Word / Microsoft Excel for printing and documentation creation purposes, the entire Microsoft Word application has to be loaded and executed when the Word Flobot is used.

4. There are several server applications in the market that are designed specifically for high volume printing and document assembly. These are back office applications that are focused and optimized for applications requiring thousand of documents to be assembled and printed. They are also much more expensive than Microsoft Office, but they solve an important problem and therefore offer good value. One example is ActiveDocs (www.keylogix.com), which is capable of document assembly and printing of 40,000 documents per hour. Customers who need high volume printing and document assembly are strongly encouraged to use these type of applications for optimum results.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this statement, please contact Ultimus Product Management at productmanagement@ultimus.com.