Help/Systems Boosts Graphics with Robot/NETWORK V10

By Alex Woodie

While it's nice to have utilities to help you manage a stand-alone System i server, systems management tools really start paying dividends when there's more than one server to manage. That is where Robot/NETWORK from Help/Systems comes into play. With the latest version of Robot/NETWORK, the company has developed a new graphical user interface (GUI) to make it even easier to track the goings-on of multiple System i servers.

Robot/NETWORK is used to connect multiple System i servers or logical partitions (LPARs) into a single chain, with a single "master" machine and a string of underling "nodes." When a given event—such as a failed backup or a failed batch job--occurs on one machine, Robot/NETWORK takes over and communicates that information up the chain of command, until the issue is resolved.

In this respect, Robot/NETWORK is sort of the glue that allows Help/Systems' customers to share, among multiple i5/OS servers (or their LPARs), the capabilities of the vendor's other products. Other Help/Systems products that are "glued" into the Robot/NETWORK (what the vendor calls the "product master") include the Robot/SCHEDULE job scheduler, the Robot/SAVE backup software, the Robot/CONSOLE job log monitor, the Robot/REPORTS report bursting and distribution module, and the Robot/MONITOR performance monitoring and reporting solution (which is a component of Robot/AUTOTUNE). The software also provides basic network monitoring and support for SNMP traps issued by third-party applications.
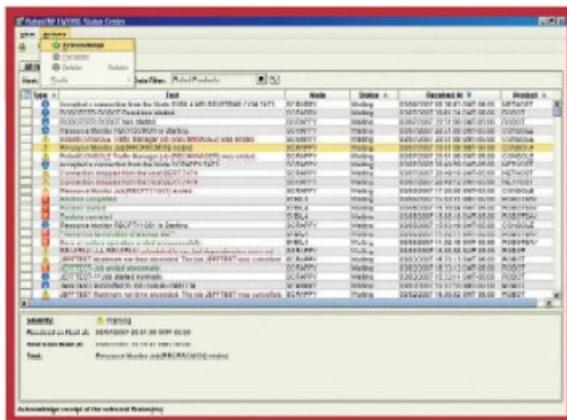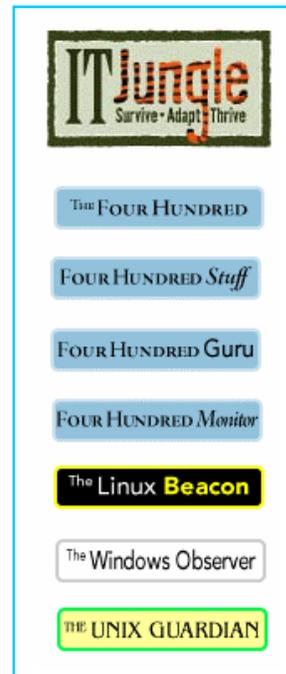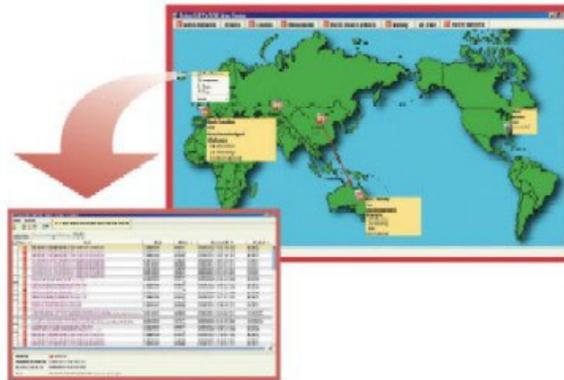

Figure 1. Help/Systems' new Robot/NETWORK Map Center gives managers a satellite's view of System i operations.

With version 10, Help/Systems has done a lot of work to boost the visibility of System i servers managed with Robot/NETWORK. Like the latest version of Robot/SCHEDULE unveiled in December, the new version of Robot/Network features a new Java-based management console, called the Robot/NETWORK Explorer, which becomes the primary interface with version 10.

The Explorer screen displays the current network configuration as an expandable tree of hosts, nodes, products, packets, reports, and other system items, while menus and toolbars provide quick access to network control options. The new Explorer interface becomes the common console for monitoring and managing job execution, system monitoring, and report distribution for customers that have also licensed other Help/Systems products.

One of the new options available with the Robot/NETWORK Explorer is a new wizard that guides the user through the process of connecting to hosts, configuring nodes, and applying product updates and changes to license codes. Help/Systems also points out that the new Explorer can be used to distribute and manage updates and license code changes for all of the Robot automation tools users have loaded onto their systems.

Figure 2. The Robot/NETWORK Status Center lets managers take actions when issues occur on System i servers.

Those who are graphically inclined will appreciate the new Robot/NETWORK Map Center. (See Figure 1.) The Map Center is a customizable graphical representation that displays the current status of a user's System i network, including network communication between hosts and nodes.

From either the Map Center or the Explorer, users can click on hosts or nodes to view and manage them using another new screen added with version 10: the Robot/NETWORK Status Center. (See Figure 2.)

The Status Center displays the status of all Help/Systems products on a server, for specific products and server, or across all servers and products. Users also can escalate status issues by sending a pager, text, or e-mail message using Robot/ALERT, by issuing an SNMP trap, or by calling a user defined program, Help/Systems says.

Robot/NETWORK version 10 is available now. Pricing ranges from $4,425 to $44,075 to install the software on a host system, and a flat fee of $2,500 per additional managed node. For more information, visit www.helpsystems.com.