

# Skybot Scheduler and SCI: Scheduling Power Into the Future



By Bob Balderson

In the early 1960s, Service Corporation International, or [SCI](#), started in Houston, TX. The company was created with the idea of sharing resources and using efficiencies of scale to cluster funeral homes and reduce costs. What followed was a long, dynamic period of expansion, culminating in a business network of nearly 1,800 funeral homes and cemeteries across North America. Next, they built on the strength of this network by introducing the first transcontinental brand of funeral services and products—Dignity Memorial. Today, with more than 20,000 dedicated employees, exclusive products and customer benefits, and best-in-class policies and professional standards, SCI is a world-leader in funeral services.

## IT Needs 24/7

Frank McCreery, the Director of Production Operations at SCI, helps provide IT services for all of their locations. The majority of their IT services are at their data center in Houston. As Frank explains, “We run a core business application designed specifically for funeral homes and cemeteries. This system runs seven days a week because our business is open all the time. We also have a data center with jobs and processes running 24/7.”

## Complex Job Scheduling

Frank describes their job processing setup. “We have three categories of jobs. First, we have our nightly batch jobs. Some of those we schedule and some we run manually. We also have about 250 interface jobs that run daily, weekly, and monthly. We run those on a timed basis, or based on the availability of another file to process. Finally, we have our financial system jobs.”

“With Skybot Scheduler, it’s easy for us to set up a job that watches for a file and launches another job when it’s available. We push and pull files all day, depending on the company we’re working with.”

As Frank explains, “Around 2002, we started growing the Microsoft environment we have today. Recently, we were looking for a job scheduler that could run on Windows. We were really excited to learn that [Skybot Software™](#) [a [Help/Systems™](#) company] offered Skybot Scheduler™ for Windows,\*

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UNIX,\* and Linux\* platforms. It was great news to get a product we felt comfortable with. We had used Robot/SCHEDULE\* [from Help/Systems] for a long time with great results.”

### A Scheduler that Handles It All

As Frank describes it, “Right now, all of our non-financial jobs are set up in Skybot Scheduler and running in production. Everything’s going well. Some of our job dependencies are based on file arrivals, so we monitor directories for files. With Skybot Scheduler, it’s easy for us to set up a job

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that watches for a file and launches another job when it’s available. We push and pull files all day, depending on the company we’re working with. In fact, we call one server our interface server. It has a directory structure that mirrors the different companies we deal with. Files go in and out of the interface server all day.

“Skybot Scheduler’s audit log is crucial to us because one of our SOX controls is to validate that we keep schedule logs for a certain period of time. An audit log is critical for a scheduler.”

### From Installation To Production—Fast!

According to Frank, installing Skybot Scheduler was easy. “The installation instructions were straightforward and we got very good technical support—all of our questions were answered quickly.”

They first started running Skybot Scheduler on a test server where they tried the different types of jobs they run. They confirmed that their jobs executed successfully and they made sure their operations team was comfortable with Skybot Scheduler. Now, as Frank explains, it’s all in production. “We’re running about 350 jobs on six servers. My staff commented that it’s very easy to set up what we call “file watcher” jobs in Skybot Scheduler. They love that—anything that makes their life easier.

“I’ve done business with Help/Systems for a long time, and when I think of the types of products the company offers and the success we’ve had, I’d say that anyone in the market for an easy-to-use Windows, UNIX, or Linux job scheduler should take a good hard look at Skybot Scheduler.”

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