

IN BRIEF

Industry

- » Non-profit

Challenges

- » Create a virtual web infrastructure to handle traffic peaks
- » Maintain 100 percent uptime
- » Reduce the amount of hardware running year round

Solution

- » Riverbed Stingray Traffic Manager virtual appliance software running on a VMware virtual infrastructure

Benefits

- » Real-time site performance measuring
- » 100 percent uptime during peak periods
- » Reporting and statistical information supports strategic decision making




Comic Relief

Comic Relief Goes Cloud Computing with the Help of Riverbed Technology

Every two years, one of the biggest events in the UK fundraising calendar is Comic Relief's Red Nose Day. The charity raises tens of millions of pounds in donations through its website, which is its primary fundraising and donation portal. It is therefore crucial to have full functionality during peak periods, and to ensure there is absolutely no downtime.

In 2009, the charity's IT team looked to improve on its 2007 performance, but in doing so faced a critical business decision of how to upgrade its IT infrastructure. The challenge was to create a virtual web infrastructure that handled the different types of traffic, which continuously peaks and bursts during the seven hour TV show, and to maintain 100 percent uptime while reducing the amount of hardware running all year round.

"The charity realized that its needs were moving beyond the limitations of the hardware they had, and were keen to take advantage of the latest and best technology to increase its capability and efficiency," explains Charlotte Melén, Comic Relief's Web Technology Manager.

Cloud was the logical choice

Carrenza helped develop Comic Relief's web and donations platforms using technology donated by the likes of Riverbed®, Cisco, HP, Oracle, and VMware.

"Our aim was to reduce the 15 racks of hardware that were on all year round, but that outside the big campaign were hardly used. So it was logical to move to virtualized machines, which enabled us to run six server racks containing 60 to 80 virtual machines. They supported the web payment front end, which was also used by 12,000 call center operators to take donations," Melén says.

"We can now scale up for the three months running up to Red Nose Day, and then scale it back down in the weeks after the event. Virtualization has created enormous benefits, with huge savings on capital investment and operating costs, energy, and administrative time.

"Migrating to cloud computing seemed a natural progression for us, as we can now manage the huge peaks of traffic that needed elasticity between platform and applications. Our web infrastructure has much greater resilience, total flexibility and scalability, as well as being designed for redundancy, with no single point of failure."

"We decided to upgrade to Riverbed Stingray Traffic Manager virtual appliance software running on a VMware virtual infrastructure, as software is more flexible and better suited for virtualized and cloud environments. We implemented and installed the software in a matter of hours and it plays a vital role in the infrastructure that supports the delivery of the rich media content, the donations section of the site, as well as the call center applications."

*Christian Riley, technical consultant,
Comic Relief*

Riverbed helps power the fundraising drive

“We decided to upgrade to Riverbed Stingray™ Traffic Manager virtual appliance software running on a VMware virtual infrastructure, as software is more flexible and better suited for virtualized and cloud environments,” describes Christian Riley, Technical Consultant to Comic Relief. “We implemented and installed the software in a matter of hours, and it plays a vital role in the infrastructure that supports the delivery of the rich media content, the donations section of the site, as well as the call center applications.”

Stingray Traffic Manager provides the ability to measure the performance of the site in real-time and will help ensure that it is highly available during peak periods. It also provides reporting and statistical information that is key in supporting business decisions in the long-term.

Riverbed was definitely the right technical partner

Riley explains, “Stingray Traffic Manager virtual appliance software fitted seamlessly with our other virtual applications, providing us with an intuitive, scalable, robust infrastructure. It’s a well renowned, tried and tested software solution in today’s market and since its deployment, I’m delighted that we have solved a number of technical challenges we previously couldn’t overcome.”

“It was of paramount importance that everything ran smoothly during the seven hours of intense concentration, and it did just that. Riverbed enabled us to scale our web capability quickly and reliably and exceeded our expectations in terms of performance and functionality needs. Just a minute of downtime would cost us dearly, so Riverbed was definitely the right technical partner for us.”

And as for the results, the 2009 fundraising event exceeded 1 GB of traffic to the site, which was a massive 242 percent increase over 2007. They also conducted over 540,000 online transactions in a seven-hour window, with peaks of 116 transactions per second. This represented a huge increase of 115 percent over 2007. With £54.7 million raised on the night, these figures put into perspective the phenomenal success of Red Nose Day 2009.

About Comic Relief

Comic Relief was launched on Christmas Day in 1985, live on BBC One. At that time, a devastating famine was crippling Ethiopia and something had to be done. That something was Comic Relief. The idea was simple – Comic Relief would make the public laugh while they raised money to help people in desperate need. Before too long, Red Nose Day was created and the first ever event in 1988 raised a staggering £15m. To date, 12 Red Nose Days have raised more than £490m. That money has helped, and is helping, to support people and communities in dire need, both in the UK and Africa.

About Riverbed

Riverbed delivers performance for the globally connected enterprise. With Riverbed, enterprises can successfully and intelligently implement strategic initiatives such as virtualization, consolidation, cloud computing, and disaster recovery without fear of compromising performance. By giving enterprises the platform they need to understand, optimize and consolidate their IT, Riverbed helps enterprises to build a fast, fluid and dynamic IT architecture that aligns with the business needs of the organization. Additional information about Riverbed (NASDAQ: RVBD) is available at www.riverbed.com.



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