

PEOPLECLICK ACCOMMODATES CLIENT GROWTH

2005 COMPUTERWORLD HONORS CASE STUDY

BUSINESS & RELATED SERVICES

A HOLISTIC SOLUTION TO HELP COMPANIES ATTRACT, ACQUIRE, AND DEPLOY A DIVERSE AND PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE ENABLES THOUSANDS OF RECRUITERS AROUND THE WORLD TO SEARCH THROUGH OVER 24 MILLION APPLICANTS QUICKLY AND PRECISELY TO MEET THE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WHILE ASSURING CANDIDATES OF RAPID, RELIABLE SUBMISSION OF JOB APPLICATIONS AND RESUMES. [20055363]

SUMMARY

As a leading provider of Total Workforce Acquisition solutions for global enterprises, Peopleclick, Inc. delivers a holistic solution to help companies attract, acquire, and deploy a diverse and productive workforce. With its managed software and consulting services, Peopleclick simplifies the workforce acquisition lifecycle and enables organizations to identify and place qualified candidates more efficiently and effectively. By upgrading its hardware environment with a high-performance, readily available server and storage infrastructure, Peopleclick enables thousands of recruiters around the world to search through over 24 million applicants quickly and precisely to meet the employment needs of their organizations while assuring candidates of rapid, reliable submission of job applications and resumes.

APPLICATION

At the core of Peopleclick's business is database of over 24 million candidates divided between nearly 300 employers around the world. Peopleclick is dedicated to helping top companies find the right employee at the right time and is driven by 24x7 service-level agreements (SLAs) with its customers. The company was experiencing—and continues to experience—extraordinary growth, adding more than 1,000,000 new candidates to its database every month through Peopleclick's web-based application. To handle this growth while meeting SLAs and providing responsive service, Peopleclick determined that an upgrade to its IT infrastructure was critical to ensuring peak performance. The project included building a large cluster of Microsoft Windows-based servers supported by an EMC CLARiiON storage area network (SAN) and EMC storage management software.

With the infrastructure upgrade, Peopleclick's objectives were to increase the performance and availability of its systems, enable higher productivity for human resource (HR) professionals, and increase the speed and reliability of its online service to candidates applying for jobs. The company set specific goals, such as page refresh time and candidate submit times. With so many candidates, one of the most important goals was increasing the speed at which recruiters could search the database to identify, evaluate and process candidates. With the higher speed and availability provided by the EMC SAN, Peopleclick was able to significantly reduce the file seek time at the system level and far exceeded its performance goals.

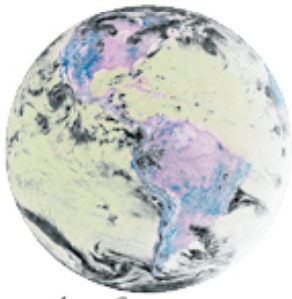
According to one of Peopleclick's largest customers, a multinational manufacturing company, "With the upgraded Peopleclick architecture, system performance has been outstanding."

BENEFITS

Peopleclick's new IT infrastructure benefits HR professionals and candidates.

For the HR organization, the primary value of the solution is productivity and business effectiveness. Because the Peopleclick application stores complete information about each candidate, including full resumes, conducting queries requires a robust IT infrastructure. Applying search criteria across millions of resumes could consume hours of a workday. Because the storage media is so fast, however, this process requires only minutes. Therefore, HR can process more applicants and fill more positions in a given period of time than was possible before.

Will Anderson, VP of Engineering Operations at Peopleclick, said, "Everything is fast — searches, finding a candidate, moving from screen to screen. A recruiter who is doing a search for a particular candidate or searching a resume for a particular keyword really appreciates the fact that we're on a fast storage



A Search for New Horizons



Robert Carrigan,
Chairman of the Chairmen's Committee

Ron Milton,
Vice-Chairman of the Chairmen's Committee

Dan Morrow,
Chief Historian

device and a fast infrastructure.”

For candidates, the primary value of the solution is responsiveness and reliability and knowing that they have successfully completed the application process when they click the “submit” button.

In addition, both HR teams and candidates benefit from increased system stability. Redundancy in the design ensures that downtime is rare. The IT staff at Peopleclick also benefit from increased stability because it dramatically reduces the amount of time spent on troubleshooting and rectifying system issues. As a result, they can spend more time performing value-added engineering to further support the success of the business.

IMPORTANCE

Information technology is essential to this solution. To meet SLAs and support the important needs of recruiters, Peopleclick established a set of minimum requirements for the technology, including performance, availability, flexibility, scalability and maintainability. They were also looking for good value and a technical team they could trust and respect.

Central to achieving Peopleclick’s goals are the reliability and high performance provided by the EMC CLARiiON CX7000 SAN, and the high availability enabled by EMC PowerPath software, which is used for load balancing and channel failover. In addition, EMC Navisphere software provides efficient, reliable storage management, allowing Peopleclick to quickly and cost-effectively adapt its infrastructure to the changing needs of the business.

Because Peopleclick expects to continue adding one million-plus candidates per month for the foreseeable future, scalability and manageability are extremely important. And because of the company’s software as a service model, availability is a major requirement.

Anderson said, “We evaluated a number of vendors against our technical criteria and in every area, EMC came out way on top. Because of our 24x7 SLAs, this business cannot afford downtime, which was a problem with our old device. Downtime translates to stability problems for our customers and that’s unacceptable. Also, the easy scalability of the CLARiiON architecture is critical to helping us manage rapid growth. In my opinion, EMC has a reputation for quality that’s unmatched in the industry and could deliver on all our requirements far better than the competitive solutions we evaluated. This technology is central to our ability to meet our business goals. The outstanding expertise and dedication of the EMC’s sales and services teams have also been critical to the project’s success.”

ORIGINALITY

With an application as large and complex as Peopleclick, it is highly unusual to solve a business problem and deliver dramatic new value at the hardware level. The Peopleclick team, however, approached the problem using proven engineering processes and, ultimately, demonstrated that the solution would be found by upgrading its server and storage infrastructure. The most exceptional aspect of the project was that the results of the new technology were immediate and significant. Peopleclick customers began calling the company on the first day after full implementation to comment on how well the solution was performing.

SUCCESS

Peopleclick holds proprietary service-level agreements with its customers, requiring certain performance levels for a range of specific functions. Across the board, Peopleclick far exceeded its goals.

While Peopleclick cannot share the performance goals established with its customers, the company can state performance statistics for a selected system operation. Prior to implementing the EMC SAN, file write time averaged seconds. With the new solution, file write time was reduced to milliseconds. As a result, this system overhead was essentially eliminated, enhancing the end-user experience.

Upon going fully operational in June 2004, Peopleclick provided immediate value to its customers and candidates. Today, thousands of recruiters around the world using Peopleclick applications and services can perform their tasks faster and more reliably than ever before, helping to match qualified candidates with open positions efficiently and effectively.

DIFFICULTY

Peopleclick faced several difficult challenges in undertaking this project. Because performance problems could result from a wide range of components, Peopleclick assembled a multi-disciplinary team of software architects, hardware systems engineers and developers to analyze the problem and pinpoint the solution. This level of cooperation allowed the company move forward quickly with a successful solution.

To gain support for the project from upper management, it was important for the IT organization to justify the solution as a long-term business investment. Peopleclick executives recognized that new infrastructure was critical to achieving their strategic goals for the company and would bring increased value to its customers.

Implementation presented an even greater challenge. Because of Peopleclick's software as a service business model and 24x7 SLAs, it was not possible for Peopleclick to shut down its systems and implement the new solution over the course of two or three weekends. Instead, the company had to selectively turn off portions of its system, port its application to the new hardware and turn that portion back on. It was critical that Peopleclick not jeopardize its business reputation or customer confidence. Therefore, upgrade windows had to be taken very selectively, the biggest difficulty being to keep the existing system operational while bringing the new system online. In four segments, Peopleclick succeeded in completing the solution implementation with absolutely no unplanned downtime or data loss throughout the life of the project.