Buzzebees

Overview

Partner: Buzzebees Co., Ltd.
Website: www.buzzebees.com
Company size: 50 employees
Country or region: Thailand
Industry: Marketing services through social media platform

Partner Profile

Buzzebees provides a marketing service through Buzzebees application on mobile devices. The goal of application is to encourage users to join activities on a social media platform in order to earn points and use those points to redeem goodies and discounts. At present, there are two million users, with an average of 13 million visits per month.
There are also 2,000 participating businesses for the e-Commerce section and eight for the Privilege CRM Application.

Situation

The company needs a system that can handle a massive load, with 20,000 concurrent users per second and an uptime rate of 99.95%. The system must also be easy-to-use and able to support the expansion to international markets.

Solutions

Buzzebees has chosen Windows Azure to run the Buzzebees application.

Benefits

Windows Azure has facilitated the system scalability and expansion to international markets for Buzzebees, with lowered operating costs.

Software and Services

Microsoft® Windows Azure™
Microsoft® Visual Studio®

After only one year of service, Buzzebees has garnered more than 2 million users, with over 20,000 concurrent users per second accessing the application to view special privilege offers from participating businesses and generating an overall 13 million visits per month. What's more, the system must also have an uptime rate of 99.95% to support these large-scale operations. All of this was made possible by Windows Azure™, which is packed with powerful features and is fully supported by Microsoft's technical team.

"When we compared the available options in terms of technical requirements, system loads, and end user simplicity, it was clear that Microsoft Azure was better, easier to use, and could provide us with more efficient performance. Importantly, the system was cost-effective and offered a halved operating cost. These were the key factors in our decision making process."

Nattida Sanguansin, Managing Director, Buzzebees Co. Ltd.

In the past, Buzzebees Co., Ltd. provided one-sided IT security management systems for government agencies. But in early 2012, the company released a mobile application named "Buzzebees", which is a combination of a social media platform, royalty programs, and e-Commerce in one application. The main goal of Buzzebees is to encourage social media users to join activities through the application including posting and sharing pictures, liking a post, and inviting their friends to join the activities. In return, users can earn rewards points which can be used as discounts for products or services as well as a chance to get free goodies from participating businesses and the company's partners. After launching, the application was very well-received and estimated to have attracted more than 2 million users by the end of 2013. During a special promotion, there were more than 20,000 concurrent users per second or 13 million views per month.

There are two kinds of participating businesses - Privilege CRM Application, and small businesses. Privilege CRM Application businesses include AIS Privilege, Samsung Galaxy Gift, Galaxy Social Plus, Kimheng Gold, and SingTel, which has recently joined as the company's latest and first international partnership. What's special about this type of partner is that they have a huge base of customers and need an application that can support a royalty program to offer special privileges for their customers.

Small businesses participate only in the e-commerce section of the Buzzebees application. Currently, there are 2,000 partners who take turns in providing special priced and new products for users., Buzzebees application users, including Privilege CRM application users, will benefit from a variety of offered privileges. Partners will also benefit from lowered operating and royalty program management costs.

Windows Azure

Situation

Usually when a business begins to plan or design its main IT systems or applications, the normal practice is to invest and deploy an in-house IT infrastructure. Even though the cloud computing concept has already been introduced to the IT market in Thailand, so far only a small number of businesses have joined the 'cloud' bandwagon and put their systems up on a cloud service. This is the reason why Buzzebees' case study is very interesting, because we got a chance to discuss with Nattida Sanguansin, Buzzebees' Managing Director, and know the thinking behind her choice of adopting cloud computing services instead of building the company's own IT infrastructure.

"When we developed the concept for Buzzebees, we saw how large was the number of social media users in our country. For example, there were 20 million Facebook users in Thailand. And if we want to develop an application that invited users to participate in Facebook activities to earn points, and then used those points to redeem rewards to create a tie-in promotion with our partner products, we will need a system that can accommodate a huge number of concurrent users from various devices including Windows® phones, Android phones or iPhones. This has been our biggest challenge," Nattida said.

"Aside from that, we planned from the beginning that we would also look to enter the international market too. Our partners in the international market also wanted this kind of applications, so we needed a platform that could support us domestically and internationally in order to achieve a scalable, easy-to-manage system."

Because of these factors, Buzzebees decided from the start that they would not invest in their own IT infrastructure, because it would require a huge investment along with complicated system administration. After examining the through the available options, the best solution was to employ Microsoft Windows Azure, which is a cloud computing service provided by a highly reliable service provider. The application can answer the company's needs in terms of scalability, investment, the capability to work across-platforms, and to provide high system security on clouds.

Solutions

After a meticulous comparison among various solutions, Buzzebees chose to adopt an Enterprise Agreement (EA) scheme for Windows Azure. This kind of licence suited the business's needs and delivered the discounts and special payment terms which were better than the Individual licence agreement. It also offered a privilege to access the Enterprise Portal, which was used to manage system resources for the selected services.

Nattida explained, "First of all, since we were pushing for the international market, the choices that we had left were Windows Azure and Amazon Web Services. When we compared both in terms of technical requirements, system loads, and user simplicity, it was clear that Microsoft Azure was better, easier to use, and could provide us with more efficient performance. What's important was that the EA licences were a smart, cost-effective investment and offered half-reduced operating costs. These were the key factors in our decision-making process."

Nattida added, "We also focused on the system's reliability. When we informed our users of special privileges through the Buzzebees application, at the peak rate, the number of concurrent users could climb up to 20,000 users per second. That means that the system must be capable of handling that massive load and we also expected that the system must be available at all time with an uptime of at least 99.95%."

"Next, we looked at the user simplicity factor. Our support team consists of three people and each person must deploy an average of four to five platforms a day every day. We also needed to take into account of which service could facilitate our work."

Benefits

After Buzzebees ran its system on the Windows Azure platform, the company's IT system administrators implemented the system tuning, such as moving some data to the cache to reduce the I/O utilization while at peak rate. As a result, the company utilized only 20 – 40 server cores a day. The IT team also took advantage of the many powerful features offered by Windows Azure including Autoscaler, which facilitates the system load while maintaining system reliability, hence bringing confidence to business partners.

The company's IT team also used Microsoft Visual Studio together with Windows Azure to facilitate the system development, testing, and resource management on the cloud.

Another standout factor that drove Buzzebees to choose Microsoft was its high quality technical support services that provide fast response and close monitoring of issues. The Microsoft support team was very knowledgeable and skillful in providing advice and solutions. And with Windows Azure's enormous capability, it was easy to expand the services to other partners. Buzzebees signed an agreement with SingTel, one of the biggest telecommunications service providers in Singapore, to provide the same kind of services in the country. The team was able to set up the system in two days and separate the system management by countries, which helped expedite the setup process while effectively managing system operating costs.

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Future Plan

Buzzebees plans to expand to other social media platforms. The domestic market – including the number of users and participating businesses that use the both Privilege CRM Applications and e-Commerce section – has a strong potential in the future. Demand from the international market is expected to grow markedly in the years to come. And Buzzebees is confident that Windows Azure can support the company's future expansion.

The company has also launched a new app called adBuzz, which aims to further capitalize on the existing customer base of over 2 million people for the media and advertisement industries. The concept for adBuzz is the same as the Buzzebees; that is, users who view partners ads will get points and can redeem those points for rewards or product samples. The company has now released the new app for download, and, yes, it is also run on Windows Azure cloud.

Software and Services
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