



Comic Relief Trusts Cisco – From Donation to Deposit



Comic Relief trusts Cisco's application acceleration infrastructure to manage over 1,000,000 telephone, online and Interactive TV donations during Red Nose Day.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CUSTOMER NAME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comic Relief
LOCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London, UK
INDUSTRY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media / Charity
COMPANY SIZE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 permanent staff, Volunteers: 15,000+
BUSINESS CHALLENGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better communicate Comic Relief's 'you can help create a just world free from poverty' message • To make collecting donations faster, simpler and more secure • To maintain high levels of trust in the Comic Relief brand through secure systems
NETWORK SOLUTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco data centre solution • Cisco application control technologies
BUSINESS VALUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps Comic Relief get money into the bank and out to great causes faster • Makes high-volume electronic donations safe and secure • Delivers a system capable of supporting over 500,000 concurrent users and handling up to a theoretical maximum of 500 donations per second • Reduces time to bank multi-million pound donations from months to days



BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Since its founding in 1985, Comic Relief has become one of the world's most successful and respected charities. Last Red Nose Day alone raised over £80 million, and Sport Relief which takes place in alternate years, raised over £40 million in 2010.

As a charity, Comic Relief works hard to keep costs to a minimum, so that money donated by the public is spent on charitable projects in the UK and worldwide. Red Nose Day is one of the busiest and most concentrated fundraising events in the world, culminating in a seven hour night of live fun and comedy on BBC One. In 2009, to support the massive response from the public, over 15,000 volunteers staffed more than 12,000 phone lines in 147 call centres nationwide – all mapping into a single virtual centre.

During that event nearly 1,000,000 people phoned, went online or used interactive TV to make a donation. And every single one of these transactions was processed by a Cisco enabled technical platform. Dealing with that volume of transactions is a huge challenge. Making a donation may be an emotional action, but the process still has to be fast and efficient.

Sport Relief is similarly huge in scale. For the 2010 event, 90 call centres offered 6365 staffed lines and more than 8500 volunteers handled the millions of pounds of donations.

“The TV audience responds in real time to something that makes them want to donate,” says Tim Savage, Donations and Web Technology Manager at Comic Relief. “If the technology doesn’t work seamlessly for them, we run the very real risk that they won’t come back. We can’t have a fault and two days later ask them to re-donate.”

The infrastructure supporting Comic Relief is a combination of database and applications from Oracle, server hardware from HP, storage hardware from 3Par, Internet access and hosting from Carrenza, and network, security and application acceleration infrastructure from Cisco.

NETWORK SOLUTION

“What Cisco delivers is an enormously capacious, stable and secure network infrastructure that enables us to take millions of pounds in donations during our TV appeals,” says Savage.

Cisco application control technology ensures that applications run at maximum performance, especially during peak demand, by forwarding traffic to the most available server. This “global and local load balancing” technology also ensures that server resources between both data centres are maximised.

Cisco also provides infrastructure security to ensure that sensitive personal data is managed securely and that the system is protected from malicious threats.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Comic Relief’s night of Red Nose Day attracts a peak audience of more than 12 million viewers. The traffic driven by the appeals is very ‘peaky’ often reaching 220 to 250 transactions per second.

On Red Nose Day, a huge seven hour TV show on the BBC attracts a peak audience of more than 12 million viewers. During that time, short appeal films are shown which drive viewers to make a donation to Comic Relief. That in turn means a huge amount of web traffic and as many as 250 transactions per second are processed online.

Cisco’s data centre solution is capable of receiving up to a theoretical maximum of 500 transactions per second and is able to securely process £5 million donated pounds in ten minutes, all the while delivering an engaging experience to around 500,000 concurrent users.

It’s a far cry from the first Red Nose Day event in 1988. Back then, there were no large scale digital systems available so donations were all taken on hundreds of thousands of paper forms. A team of dedicated volunteers then spent up to six months processing the vast amount of data which had been collected on those forms before Comic Relief could receive all the cash donated by the public.



PRODUCT LIST
<p>ROUTING AND SWITCHING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cisco Catalyst 6509-E Switch
<p>APPLICATION NETWORKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cisco ACE Application Control Engine Module
<p>SECURITY AND VPN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cisco Firewall Service Modules Storage

Now, things have changed beyond recognition. It takes just three days for the money donated online to reach Comic Relief's bank account so it can begin to help people in real need across the UK and internationally far more quickly than ever before.

Cisco is also helping Comic Relief with digital marketing to reach more supporters with relevant messages.

"We continue to benefit greatly from the commitment from people who give us money and trust us to do the right thing with it," Savage says. "Working with partners like Cisco, who themselves are highly trusted and know how to deliver brilliant technology that works every time, is critical to what we do."



Cisco's Unified Communications system was implemented by Avec Systems, a Cisco Gold Certified Partner.

For more details please visit www.cisco.com/uk/smb

"Cisco's technology is cutting edge and we are proud to work with them. From an enterprise switching and firewall point of view, Cisco is unlikely to be beaten. But on top of all this, as a global leader of corporate responsibility – a truly good, active, insightful and productive global citizen, Cisco really gets what Comic Relief is all about."

Marcus East, Head of Future Media and Technology, Comic Relief



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