

Car&Boat Media optimizes the performance of its Web sites — La Centrale, Caradisiac, Forum Auto and Annonces Bateau — thanks to ALOHA Load Balancer.

The leading French vendor of Internet classified ads for cars and boats relies on Exceliance load balancing solutions in order to ensure availability and to improve the performance of Web sites with very high traffic volumes, as the number of visitors and pages viewed is increasing constantly.

Project Overview

Customer:

Car&Boat Media

Group:

Subsidiary of SPIR Communication

Business sector:

Classified ads for cars and boats

Head Office:

La Garenne Colombes (92), France

Customer Requirements:

- Ensure availability and improve performance of Web sites with very high traffic volumes
- Optimize the legacy infrastructure in order to be able to manage peak loads
- Replace Radware AppDirector load balancers which have proved unsatisfactory for layer 7 load balancing

Chosen Solution:

ALOHA Load Balancer 16K

The challenges of high Web traffic

The Car&Boat Media sites—such as La Centrale, Caradisiac, Forum Auto, or Annonces Bateau—have several million pages viewed every day, making them heavyweights on the French Internet. Since July 2009, all the paper versions of these publications have been replaced with Web-based versions, except for Annonces du Bateau with its very faithful readership of the magazine sold at newsstands. This trend is requiring the company to provide its visitors with quality service: fast, reliable, and accessible 24/7.

In order to meet these challenges, Car&Boat Media set up a load balancing solution (the AppDirector load balancer from Radware) in October 2008. However, the result proved unsatisfactory for layer 7 (Web application) load balancing: response times got steadily worse, notably during peak traffic. This new and unstable solution required several monthly updates; furthermore, no support was available for France.

With both the Paris Motor Show 2010 on the horizon (and the high traffic volumes it generates on the Group's automobile sites) and a prime time advertising campaign, Car&Boat Media could not take the prolonged risk of poor performance or interruption of service.

Intelligent load balancing

QA few months before the Motor Show, the Group decided to replace its legacy load balancing solution. The Car&Boat Media IT team had very little time to identify the source of the performance problems, test solutions available on the market, and check their performance in the Group's Web site environments.

"The pages of our site —particularly La Centrale— are generated dynamically based on multiple components, and require a large number of queries. In order to optimize their display and offload our databases, we needed "intelligent" routing performed in layer 7, the application layer", said Nicolas Lacourte, Infrastructure Manager at Car&Boat

Car&Boat Media also followed the recommendations of the experts at Exceliance for overhauling its load balancing architecture. One half of the load balancers is now dedicated to layer 4 (the network layer) while the other half is dedicated to layer 7 (application) in order to offload the databases by handling queues, buffering data, dynamically adjusting the number of simultaneous connections, etc.

After two months of tests during the summer of 2010, the solution went live in September, just before the Paris Motor Show.

Immediately cost effective

The results were striking: despite the regular increase in traffic at its sites (on the order of 10% per year) as well as traffic peaks generated by the show and the TV advertising campaign, the average load of the 180 servers in the Car&Boat Media architecture dropped to historically low levels. The load, more linear and less abrupt, was actually cut in half, falling to 30% of CPU usage from 60% previously.

This represents considerable savings to the company. With its site audience growing constantly, Car&Boat Media would

have had to rapidly invest in new servers — but the Exceliance solution spared that investment. *"With such performance improvement, we feel that the ALOHA solution paid for itself over the course of a single weekend,"* said Nicolas Lacourte.

Project Summary

Description

Car&Boat Media has used the Exceliance ALOHA Load Balancer solution since September 2010 to ensure continuity of service and fluidity for its Caradisiac, Forum Auto, La Centrale, and Annonces du Bateau Web sites.

Challenges

- Improve response times for sites facing a 10% annual increase in the number of visitors and pages viewed
- Manage peak loads generated by special events (Paris Motor Show, prime time TV advertising campaigns, etc.)

Key Benefits

- 50% reduction in server load
- Significant improvement in service levels without investing in new servers
- Return on investment in a single weekend



Exceliance markets a range of high availability and load balancing solutions to improve performance, ensure availability, and optimize the infrastructure of mission-critical applications (Web, DBMS, email, Terminal Server, ERP, etc.).

Initially developed using the HAProxy open source load balancing program, ALOHA (Application Level Optimization & High Availability) solutions optimize networks and application flows.

Exceliance, based in Jouy-en-Josas outside Paris, has attracted leading corporations in banking, retail, utilities, ecommerce, and the public sector. Its solutions are also used by numerous hosting service providers.

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