Kvick.com subscribes to success with IBM Linux solution.

Overview

- **Application**
  B2C and B2B Web and wireless storefronts selling magazine subscriptions in northern Europe
- **Business Benefits**
  Savings of thousands of dollars per year in software licensing costs; ability to integrate easily with wide variety of open source software solutions; 50,000 new customers in the first year
- **Software**
  IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for Linux®; Tivoli® System Manager
- **Server**
  IBM Netfinity®
- **Business Partner**
  Netmill
- **Services**
  IBM Global Services

When Kvick needed a reliable, scalable data management solution for more than 2,000 magazine titles and multiple language sets, it chose IBM DB2 Universal Database for Linux.

Information-hungry readers all over the world appreciate the value of magazines, supporting over 330,000 titles worldwide. But one thing they don't appreciate is having to dig up information in order to subscribe. A reader without a copy of the magazine in hand and an inexact title could search for hours, even using the Web, before finding the correct subscription contacts.

"IBM has put a lot of resources behind its commitment to Linux to make it possible for companies like Kvick.com to develop low-cost, industrial-strength solutions for e-business."

—Victor Donselaar, Open Source Specialist, Netmill

Linux—freedom to innovate

Customers can subscribe to magazines from Kvick.com's Web site or order with short message service on WAP-enabled mobile phones.

Helsinki, Finland-based Kvick.com wants to make that task easier for magazine readers in Finland, Sweden and, soon, across Northern Europe. With its new Web-based storefront for magazine subscriptions, Kvick.com (pronounced "quick") provides a convenient clearinghouse for busy consumers and businesses wanting to find magazines quickly and subscribe in a few easy steps. Unlike other online magazine services, Kvick.com offers a full range of titles, not just the most popular ones. Customers can use the service to subscribe to any of 330,000 titles published worldwide, including 2,000 titles now listed on the site. Furthermore, readers receive prompt, professional service without being inundated by promotional offers.

Not only is Kvick.com staking out a unique space on the Internet, it is also leveraging one of the most popular new media in Northern Europe—mobile phones equipped with short message service (SMS) technology. Businesses and consumers can order their subscriptions using their cell phones and the 160-character SMS message screens that have become almost a cultural institution in Finland. A remarkable 76 percent of the country's population of 5 million own the devices.

IBM Business Partner Netmill, a leading consultant and creator of digital business solutions, partnered with Kvick.com from the start. Netmill assisted Kvick.com in formulating a business plan and took on the role of solution consultant and implementor. Netmill's operation is a center of Linux expertise, and Netmill chose the Linux operating system running on an IBM Netfinity 7100 server to provide a stable, scalable and affordable platform for the young company to grow on. Linux also offered the ability to integrate with other technologies and software, including thousands of free, open source software programs.

However, finding a robust database capable of drilling through duplicate language sets presented more of a challenge. The initial choice, Open Source MySQL, was not flexible enough to handle even basic database operations on the complex database.

"With the reliability and stability we get from IBM DB2 Universal Database, the Linux operating system and the powerful dual-processor IBM Netfinity server, Kvick.com has the technology infrastructure it needs to grow and become a market leader."

—Victor Donselaar

Netmill evaluated other databases including Oracle, which it found too expensive for its customer's needs. Netmill encountered the ideal solution in IBM DB2 Universal Database for Linux, Version 7.1. As Victor Donselaar, open source specialist for Netmill, comments, "In addition to being a robust and scalable database, DB2 provides performance monitoring utilities that help us optimize the site."

Donselaar continues, "With the reliability and stability we get from IBM DB2 Universal Database, the Linux operating system and the powerful dual-processor IBM Netfinity server, Kvick.com has the technology infrastructure it needs to grow and become a market leader."

Built for rapid expansion

The ambitious startup company intends to be the largest online magazine subscription service in Northern Europe. To further differentiate itself from other Web-based subscription services, the company has a unique four-part business model. In addition to targeting individuals, Kvick.com will soon launch a business-to-business (B2B) extranet for business purchasers. It also offers fundraising programs for young peoples' sports clubs, and it operates a telemarketing service for cooperative business-to-consumer (B2C) campaigns with publishers.

IBM Netfinity server running the Linux operating system provides a stable, reliable platform for Kvick.com's business-to-consumer and business-to-business magazine subscription services.

Kvick.com currently has 50,000 subscribers and is offering Finnish and Swedish language sites. The company's immediate goal is to add sites in Danish and Norwegian within a few months. Each new language adds more large data sets to DB2 Universal Database, but Netmill is confident that DB2 can handle the workload.

Powerful Web infrastructure

IBM DB2 Universal Database for Linux is the data management solution for product information, users and user groups, as well as site-specific information. When a customer submits an order for a magazine, Apache Server receives the request from the Internet and manages the business logic that retrieves data from the database and embedded HTML scripting for Web pages from PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) open source middleware. PHP middleware then stores the transaction in DB2 Universal Database.

When the order is received, one of the firm's 65 employees routes it to the publisher over the Internet. Kvick.com bills the customer and transmits funds to the publisher.

Apache, PHP, DB2 Universal Database and RedHat Linux Version 6.2 run on the Netfinity

server along with open source Secure Shell Software for remote site administration and Tivoli System Manager for system monitoring. IBM Global Services is hosting the Web site with remote administration from both Kvick.com and Netmill. IBM also provided a 1MBps connection with the Internet.

"Linux runs very well on the Netfinity server," says Donselaar. "And being able to run all our software on one server enables us to keep our maintenance costs down. Whenever we want to, we can add new data tables or other data elements to DB2 Universal Database, which gives us a flexible infrastructure for collecting the information Kvick.com needs to operate."

Unleashing the power of kids on phones
Almost every youngster in Finland over the age of 12 owns a mobile phone equipped with SMS. Kvick.com is putting this trend to work with Kvick Junior, a program that enables young peoples' sports groups to earn money while publishers sell magazines. The youths enter orders and submit them using SMS. An open source WAP/SMS gateway provider processes the SMS orders and transmits them into the Kvick.com database.

According to Jukka Räsänen, managing director of Kvick.com, "The IBM Linux solution integrates with all our open source tools, including wireless applications. We're saving thousands of dollars in software costs, and the maintenance costs for the site are very low."

The next phase of the Kvick.com evolution will involve integrating with backend operations to enable orders to be processed through to publishers. For now, however, Kvick.com is concentrating on its marketing plans and leveraging the strengths it has developed with its IBM Linux solution to develop its customer base. "Our technical support contacts at IBM answer all of our questions within 24 hours," says Donselaar. "IBM has put a lot of resources behind its commitment to Linux to make it possible for companies like Kvick.com to develop low-cost, industrial-strength solutions for e-business."

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