

Case Study: DIGITAL and Voyager New Zealand Ltd.

New Zealand ISP Voyages Nationwide with Stellar DIGITAL Prioris™ Servers

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–John O’Hara, Managing Director

Voyager New Zealand Ltd.

In 1995, Voyager New Zealand Ltd. launched that country’s first truly nationwide Internet service. With points of presence (POPs) in major population centers and toll-free dial-in phone numbers for all other areas, Voyager turned New Zealand’s fledgling Internet market on its ear – and has been doing so ever since. Today, with over 20,000 business and individual customers, Voyager is firmly entrenched as New Zealand’s second-largest Internet service provider.

According to Voyager managing director John O’Hara, the keys to attracting and retaining customers are top-notch service and maximum system uptime. “From the beginning, Voyager has run all of its core Internet services on DIGITAL Prioris servers – that’s how much trust we put in their reliability and their performance,” says O’Hara. “As our business has grown, we’ve stayed with DIGITAL for the same reasons our customers stay with us – great service, unmatched reliability, and very competitive pricing.”

Dependable Prioris Servers = Absolute Uptime

Today, Voyager has nine DIGITAL Prioris XL Pentium®-based servers. The servers run all of Voyager’s Internet services, including its WWW server, FTP server,

proxy server, gopher server, virtual Web server for UNIX, and virtual Web server for Windows NT®. Voyager also has three DIGITAL Venturis™ systems that run ancillary services for customers, such as providing statements of accounts and tracking their time on line.

With customers accessing its servers over 650,000 times a week, Voyager cannot afford downtime. One thing Voyager doesn’t worry about is its computing hardware. “Since starting operations in November 1995, we’ve never had any failure – of any kind – with our DIGITAL Prioris systems,” says Voyager’s operations director, Alistair Stevens. “It’s really quite amazing, because in that time we haven’t had even a disk crash. Our customers want maximum uptime, and in terms of the hardware platform, we’ve given them 100 percent availability.”

Stevens notes that Voyager’s parent company in Australia, OzEmail Limited, also has numerous DIGITAL Prioris servers. “They have perhaps five to six times as many servers as we have, and they’ve experienced the same stellar record of availability,” says Stevens.

DIGITAL Nimble Helps Voyager Build and Maintain Close Relationships with Customers and Suppliers

Despite increased competition in New Zealand’s ISP market, Voyager continues to expand its customer base. “We’ve built a great reputation and have very loyal customers,” says Stevens. “We focus on such things as personalized customer service, system uptime, and giving the customer a really good experience about using the Internet.”

Stevens knows that business is a two-way street, and that close customer relationships are just part of the picture. “One of the things that Voyager tries to do is build tight working relationships with its suppliers,” says Stevens. “This is an area where DIGITAL has been great.”

“Back in November of 1995 when we launched the business, all of our DIGITAL servers were located in Sydney,” Stevens recalls. “The only equipment we had in New Zealand were modems, terminal servers, and routers – all connected to a big pipe running back to Sydney. In May of 1996 we made the decision to set up servers here in New Zealand in order to take some pressure off the trans-Tasman overseas link and to give us greater flexibility to host customer Web sites and virtual domains.”

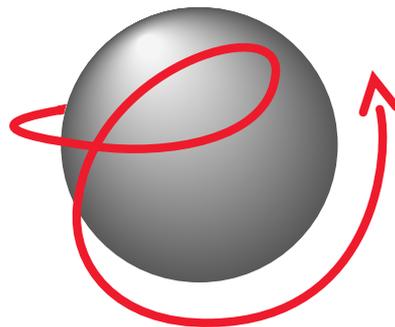
OzEmail chose to keep the servers to meet their own growing capacity demands, so Voyager called DIGITAL to order more Prioris servers. “Our needs were urgent, and we needed delivery of the systems within a week,” says Stevens. “DIGITAL pulled out all the stops and delivered the systems on time, configured exactly as we wanted them. That’s the kind of responsiveness we need. The Internet market moves very quickly, and we need suppliers who are as nimble as we are. The day we went live, all of the systems were 100 percent operational. We’ve built a great relationship with DIGITAL, and we’ve recommended DIGITAL to many of our clients.”

Windows NT* is “an Administrator’s Dream”

Although the majority of Voyager’s servers are running BSDI UNIX today, Stevens expects to ultimately transition many or all of them to Windows NT. “We have several NT-based servers operational now, and are very impressed with the ease of system setup and management,” says Stevens.

Voyager is offering virtual Web services on a Windows NT-based Prioris server to host Web sites for its business customers. “With Internet Information Server (IIS), it was very simple to configure this server – vastly simpler than with BSDI UNIX,” explains Stevens. With UNIX, we’re talking at least a day – and more likely two days – of work to build and configure it. When we set up our NT virtual Web server, we spent a half day or less.”

Stevens says that it’s easy to track resource utilization on the Windows NT-based servers. “We can monitor CPU loads, drives, memory – all of that is displayed in IIS through a very friendly user interface. And we really like the logging facility – it’s very straightforward in set up, and logs all the data we need in terms of server hits or FTP downloads. We’ve even used the data to plan server upgrades of memory and disk. From that perspective, NT and IIS are a bit of a system administrator’s dream, really.”



Voyager **Discover the Internet**

“Another factor that will drive our move from UNIX to NT is performance. Most of our DIGITAL servers are dual Pentium*, and NT takes advantage of the second processor whereas BSDI doesn’t. Windows NT really does leverage the full capability of the hardware platform, and gives us a big improvement in horsepower,” says Stevens.

Modular Internet Software and Windows NT from Microsoft* Pave Way to Voyager’s Future

Given Voyager’s future plans for Windows NT, Stevens signed up last fall as a beta site for the Microsoft Commercial Internet System (MCIS) software. “MCIS delivers in one suite of products a turnkey solution for ISPs,” says Stevens. “The architecture is well thought out, nicely integrated, and based on standards. What’s nice is that we can use just a few components of MCIS –

or all of them – and deploy them over time to enhance the services we currently offer. MCIS will help us present a more unified face to our customers, and help reduce the support costs of our current patchwork of applications.”

As Voyager looks around, it sees its own direction with Windows NT is in sync with that of its customers. Voyager provides technical consulting services to business customers who want to connect their corporate networks via gateways to the Internet – primarily with leased lines and high-speed ISDN connections. Through these consulting efforts, Voyager gets to work with a broad cross-section of companies, and to see first hand the evolution of corporate mail systems.

“We’re seeing more and more companies take a Microsoft Exchange Server-based corporate LAN running on Windows NT and link that as an SMTP mail server to the Internet,” explains Stevens. “That’s a big improvement over just a year ago, when we spent a lot of time working with companies who had cobbled together mail systems based on UNIX. Exchange servers are vastly simpler to configure.” Over time, we expect to see an avalanche of business customers who also want to run their Web sites on Windows NT – partially because of the advanced Web tools available on that platform, such as FrontPage 97.”

“Windows NT clearly has a very bright future as an Internet server platform,” concludes Stevens. With IIS, it’s easy to set up and so easy to manage. And with MCIS sitting on top of that, there’s only one way that NT can go in the server market, and that’s up. We definitely see more Windows NT in our future and – without question – we’ll run it on DIGITAL Prioris servers.”

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