Case study

Pulsant supports the arts by providing enterprise cloud to Edinburgh International Festival

The Edinburgh International Festival is an annual cultural event that brings together artists, performers, actors and audiences from all over the world. The festival lasts three weeks and transforms the city of Edinburgh into an inspired, frenetic hub of activity. One of the main tools used by attendees is the festival’s website www.eif.co.uk that attracted 131,819 unique visitors in 2013 (and 184,941 overall). The site provides information regarding the programme itself, as well as on the city, venues, accommodation and transport. In addition, the website provides the gateway to an online ticketing system, and as such, its availability is crucial to the success of the festival and satisfaction of audiences.

Consult and create
Recognising the need for a partner to meet its hosting requirements, The Edinburgh International Festival, a registered charity, identified Pulsant as that provider.

“We have worked with Pulsant for almost seven years”, said Rob Knight, IT and Database Manager, Edinburgh International Festival (EIF). “The team has supplied us with web hosting and other services throughout that time and has been instrumental in collaborating with us to develop solutions that meet the festival’s changing needs”.

When initially selecting a provider, EIF’s main requirements were resilience, failover and capacity for the website.

“We run a high profile event that attracts people from all over the world and, as a result, they have a lot of expectations. This is especially evident when we launch our programme and when tickets go on sale”.

Over the years the website has evolved from a brochure-type information site into a fully interactive ecommerce offering that enables visitors to plan their trip, select performances and explore the festival in more depth. The website also facilitates tickets sales by directing visitors to an externally hosted ticketing site.

“Pulsant was incredibly helpful in the planning and specifying the platform and discussing our needs and matching them to the solution, in terms of hosting and connectivity, especially in meeting the demands of the ticketing system and the peaks experienced when tickets go on sale”, explained Knight.
Integrate and activate

In 2013 the company upgraded its ticketing system linked to the website, it was necessary to redevelop and redesign the website. Both the new site and ticketing system were required to work together to deliver online sales, as well as to bring an enhanced experience to users by addressing the changing digital landscape and performing well on mobile devices.

The new website therefore needed an infrastructure to support it. Pulsant engaged with the EIF team, as well as the design agency that built the website to develop a solution fit for purpose that would deliver the improved performance required. This included proposing an architecture that incorporated hardware-based load balancing, caching, application servers, and database servers. This was all facilitated through a move from private cloud to Pulsant’s more comprehensive, enterprise cloud solution. Enterprise cloud offers more flexibility and improved performance by changing the architecture and adding more resource to the platform.

The EIF website experiences three main peaks during the year – the first during the launch of its programme, the second when tickets are made available for purchase, and the third when the festival actually begins. With up to 50% of the event’s tickets sold in the first six to eight weeks of release, the constant availability of the website is key, as is the connectivity Pulsant provides between the website and the externally hosted ticketing system. Pulsant’s enterprise cloud ensures maximum uptime of the website, especially during high traffic periods.

Support and evolve

The website now has content that is more visible and attractive to visitors with a new media library that houses the festival’s multimedia content – both for the current, as well as previous events.

“The website is fully responsive, able to resize and adapt to the full range of devices that audiences may be viewing it on. This is especially important as people move from show to show across the city, sometimes spending entire days on the move. Our digital presence is also much more integrated across channels, platforms and our offline communications”, Knight said. As the festival continues to grow, the needs of the audience will also change and it’s important for the organisation to have a platform that can easily cater for this expansion, as well as a knowledgeable team of support staff and solutions architects that understand the needs of the business.

Chris Shields, Regional Sales Director, Pulsant, added: “We have worked with EIF over many years and one of the success factors of the relationship has been the way in which we’ve engaged with the team. Over the years we have been extremely collaborative in determining which technology solutions will deliver on the festival’s business outcomes, and this is something we continue to do. EIF’s needs and outcomes have evolved over the years and by leveraging our experience and understanding of the technology, the solutions continue to meet requirements and yield tangible business outcomes”.

The website now enables visitors to discover broader and deeper information on shows and events, as well as easily book through the site. “Throughout this entire process, EIF as an organisation has undergone a massive shift from Internet access being a tool, to it being absolutely business critical. Pulsant has provided us with excellent support and consultation to really ensure that our current needs are met and our future needs are considered”, concluded Knight.

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