CommuniGate SYSTEMS

INDUSTRY

Doctors.net.uk is the largest, most active medical network in the United Kingdom. Created by doctors, for doctors, it is now the most popular, trusted medical channel enabling communication to and between more than 140,000 doctors, all day, every day.

Doctors.net.uk is funded by allowing communication from third parties to its members. This keeps the service free of charge for members, and allows for continuous development of new services and improvements. When a doctor registers at Doctors.net.uk, details of their specialty, seniority and clinical interests are recorded so that the doctor can then engage and interact with information and resources specific to their clinical interests.

Doctors.net.uk offers their members a variety of free, valuable online services. There is continuous medical input into the content and the development of the website to ensure that it anticipates the needs of the busy clinician. Services include a wide range of accredited education modules linked to a portfolio of professional tools for personal development, and a lifelong professional e-mail address. The e-mail service is the only web based e-mail service accepted in all hospitals and General Practice surgeries making it the preferred choice for doctors.

CommuniGate Pro is the Preferred Choice for Doctors.net.uk

CHALLENGE

Doctors.net.uk has more than 85,000 registered e-mail addresses and has plans to expand even further. Due to the large number of accounts, Doctors.net.uk needed a more stable and scalable e-mail solution than their prior product, IPSwitch's Imail. The use of their legacy solution with a high quantity of very active accounts was bound to fail. "We couldn't scale sufficiently with Imail, nor was Imail clusterable," said Magnus Traff, IT director at Doctors.net.uk. They experienced frequent message corruption, and received a large number of complaints stemming from large message queues, and sporadic delivery of e-mail. On top of that, Doctors.net.uk needed a tool that would be able to handle the predicted increase in the number of accounts (estimated to be in the region of 20%-25%) primarily due to expansion of the service offering to nursing staff.

SOLUTION

While it is impossible to predict an exact percentage in growth, Doctors.net.uk no longer has to worry about their communications software failing any scaling requirements. "We ended up choosing CommuniGate Pro because it fits into the natural comparison we had of Doctors.net.uk to an ISP. The software was clearly developed from the ground up with ISP's in mind, and the ease with which additional domains and capacity can be added are powerfully persuasive features," said Traff. Due to the very high performance-cost ratio, overall high performance and stability, complete function set, and the lack of need to also implement a large Oracle database for the solution, CommuniGate Pro was selected over Openwave in this opportunity. In addition to matching existing functionality to Imail, CommuniGate Pro also prepared Doctors.Net for future forms of IP Communications service offerings.

CommuniGate Pro enables Doctors.net.uk to turn on Instant Messaging and Presence to users at any time with the Pronto! flash-based web application, or even SIP-based VoIP with the existing infrastructure.

The webmail interface for Doctors.Net.UK was customized by the CommuniGate Systems Professional Services team and tightly integrated into the Doctors.Net web portal. The webmail interface displays technical and targeted industry data within the webmail environment, clickable as web links. The web portal and webmail environments work through a single sign-on authentication and function together as a single site. CommuniGate Pro CLI-based scripting integrates the CRM, web, and messaging systems delivering a fully automated registration and account creation solution.

Migration from Imail was performed using CommuniGate Pro's MoveIMAPMail migration tool, in conjunction with Perl scripts written by CommuniGate System Professional Services to automate the migration process, as well as to import Address Book (Contacts), signatures, RPOP, and Calendar data. The migration was performed using the CommuniGate "Live and Transparent" proxy migration process, whereby both the legacy system and the new CommuniGate Pro cluster are online simultaneously, and where subscribers are moved from the legacy system to the new system with both systems active, so that all users have continuous access to their e-mail.

"If any questions do occur, CommuniGate Pro is extremely well documented in a consistent and easily digestible format, and if the documentation and mail-groups fail to answer FAQ's, the "Responsive, knowledgeable and proactive technical support hotline is available to take your questions. Performance far exceeds our previous solution, fully living up to promises made by CommuniGate Systems when we initially purchased."

SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

Doctors.net.uk uses industry standard servers to run and maintain an IP Communications system with over 85,000 accounts. For this task, they chose four identical Sun Microsystems T2000 SPARC systems running Solaris 10, arranged in a 2+2 (2 Frontends, 2 Backends) "all-active Dynamic cluster." Their machines possess 8GB of RAM each, and the two frontends store data across two mirrored 72GB internal disks. The backends are connected to a NetApp FAS 3020 shared storage system with an initial capacity of 2.8TB, but scalable up to 30TB.

With CommuniGate Systems' exclusive dynamic clustering technology, future expansion is nothing Doctors.net.uk has to worry about. To accommodate a higher volume of traffic, Doctors.net.uk can easily add frontend or backend nodes to the cluster on a as-needed basis, without any interruption in service or downtime.

BENEFITS

Membership of Doctors.net.uk is open to all GMC registered doctors as well as medical students during their qualifying years. As such, this represents a significant cross section of a community with differing needs and circumstances. One common theme amongst this particular community is the necessity to keep up with the current established clinical practices and understandings. The ability to communicate efficiently, reliably, and securely allows for un-compromised collaboration between professionals.

CommuniGate Pro supports Doctors.net.uk's backbone in client fulfillment and in the company's effort to exceed internal and external expectations of a world class messaging provision. Traff added, "The active dynamic clustering technology and the platform's wide range of value added Internet Communications services have secured Doctors.net.uk.uk abilities to meet our clients' future demands today. The migration from a 60,000 user legacy e-mail system to CommuniGate Pro went according to plan, and the impact on the IT service delivery has meant stability and achievement of key performance indicators." Doctors.net.uk is planning to not only increase amount of users but also to offer new value add services with Rich Media Internet Communications empowering the doctors to access e-mail, voice, Instant Messaging, video, RSS news via one single address space (name@domain.com).

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