Rackspace HOSTING

zendesk

Zendesk Growth Soars with New Relic and Rackspace®

Rackspace and New Relic provide the SaaS help desk company with high availability and performance.

With more than 15,000 customers in more than 140 countries, Zendesk is a hugely popular cloud-based help desk system used by companies of all sizes, including Groupon, OpenTable, Zappos, Gilt, Rovio, and Dropbox, among others. Zendesk's goal is to fully democratize the help desk, making it possible for any company, large or small, to provide superior customer service while also empowering its customers.

As a growing SaaS company, Zendesk needs to provide its users with near-perfect uptime, rapid feature rollout, and ease of use. The company relies on help from Rackspace and New Relic for these things, and it has paid off: User response has been enthusiastic, with Zendesk frequently receiving videos and thank-you messages from users testifying that Zendesk has made their lives easier by providing access to all the information they need to help their customers.

HELP DESKS IN THE CLOUD

Zendesk is built for the cloud, with an open architecture that allows easy integration with a myriad of communication channels, including email, Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones, web portals, online chat, and VoIP. The product aggregates individual customers' communications across platforms, so service agents can see the whole history of a ticket, rather than having to view multiple locations or systems.

As Zendesk grew, they discovered that they were moving beyond the capabilities of their initial hosting environment and turned to Rackspace for help. "We worked closely with the Rackspace team to build a modern architecture that would provide the level of performance, scalability, and security we needed," says Zack Urlocker, Zendesk COO.

With development teams in California and Denmark, Zendesk embraces an agile devel-

opment model to achieve its goals, rapidly rolling out new services like integrations with Facebook, Twitter, and Windows Phones, in addition to features like benchmark and real-time reporting. According to director of operations Tim Sturge, Rackspace makes this speed possible, providing hardware and taking care of nitty-gritty jobs like network configurations, so the Zendesk team can focus on user-facing features.

"Rackspace has enabled us to rapidly expand our hardware footprint while we maintain control over what kind of services we want to deploy," Sturge says. "We've been able to avoid a lot of the intricacies around network configuration and hardware management. We don't want to have to spend our time swapping out disk drives."

Rackspace has also helped increase the software's speed by providing Fusion-io

drives, which have made a significant performance improvement in database I/O. Traditional I/O operations read about 200 items per minute. Fusion-io can read about 200,000 per minute, allowing Zendesk to use their databases much more efficiently. "Providing us with Fusion-io has been tremendous," Sturge says.

PROVIDING PEAK PERFORMANCE WITH NEW RELIC

Help desks are critical to many companies' operations, and the Zendesk team knows that any Zendesk performance issue or outage can cause their customers to suffer. For Zendesk, preventing issues and resolving them quickly if they do occur is vitally important. Solving performance issues can be challenging and complex – especially if a company uses a cloud environment utilizing many different technologies, with a multitenant architecture, a sharded database architecture, and has customers on different servers.

Zendesk processes some 60,000 requests per minute and 500,000 queries per minute at peak load times. When the team found and tried New Relic, they were astonished at the immediate insights they gained into where and how they could improve Zendesk performance.

New Relic gave the team an easy-to-use, intuitive tool to help them pinpoint and resolve issues quickly, rapidly becoming the backbone of Zendesk's performance monitoring strategy. "It runs all the time, every day, constantly providing us information on how Zendesk is doing," says Sturge. "The New Relic dashboard is excellent at showing us if we have a performance problem and where it is – database, application, etc. Being able to take that information and drill down to the source is terrific."

"The New Relic Dashboard is up in the office 24/7, so we notice if there is any blip in our performance," says Sturge. "We're big users of the drill-down capabilities. Transaction traces help us figure out where things went wrong. New Relic is so ingrained in our process that every troubleshooting exercise we go through involves using the tool. It's part of the Zendesk fabric."

A WINNING COMBINATION

Zendesk sees using both New Relic and Rackspace solutions as best-of-breed providers in their respective spaces – performance monitoring and hosting platform. The two solutions complement each other, each contributing to achieving the level of availability and performance their customers have come to expect and rely on. In addition to pinpointing performance issues, New Relic shows Zendesk how its application interacts with the Rackspace infrastructure underpinnings, so the team can achieve the most effective and efficient use of their hosting environment.

Uptime is also a major consideration for Zendesk, and Rackspace and New Relic help the company meet – and often exceed – its published SLA of 99.9% uptime per month. With more than 65 million end users interacting with the system, the service has to be constantly accessible from any device, anywhere. New Relic provides the team with great visibility into performance issues and the ability to quickly find and resolve them. "Rackspace delivers phenomenal uptime, they have good failover capabilities, and their communication is outstanding," says Sturge.

Together the Rackspace hosted environment and the New Relic application performance tool create a foundation for SaaS application success. In turn, this frees up the Zendesk team to work on application features. After all, that's Zendesk's objective – to make and deliver the best cloud-based help desk solution on the market.

New Relic®

To learn more about performance monitoring from New Relic, and to sign up for a New Relic account for Rackspace Cloud customers, visit newrelic.com/rackspace.

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