



Dedicated cloud platform brings stability to Attraction World

About Attraction World

Attraction World is one of the world's leading theme park and attraction specialists, selling tickets to over 8,000 theme parks and attractions worldwide, including Alton Towers, Disneyland Paris and Universal Studios, as well as experience days and other activities in over 60 countries around the world. Since the company launched in 2006, it has enabled over six million customers to pre-book tickets to attractions through travel agents and direct to customers via its two primary websites: attractiontix.co.uk and floridatix.co.uk

The challenge

Attraction World has always been innovative when it comes to their IT. Since day one, the company's route to market has been online – with a shared hosted solution provided by Claranet. They were, in this sense, born in the cloud – well before the term was coined.

Faced with rapid growth, it quickly became clear that due to the nature of shared infrastructure, the service could not guarantee the level of reliability and resilience Attraction World needed. Russell Parr, Operations & IT Director at Attraction World, explained:

"I joined Attraction World in early 2010, and at that time we had a turnover of around £35 million. We were using Claranet's shared virtual platform, which meant that we didn't have dedicated infrastructure which was purely for us to use. While it was fit-for-purpose in our early growth stages, we started having a few performance issues and very quickly recognised that we'd outgrown the platform. As an e-commerce business, we needed to have the very best performance available to us at any given time. If somebody on the platform suddenly had a five-fold increase in their traffic, it could potentially have a detrimental impact on the quality of service we could deliver to our customers.

"At the same time, Google started to change the way it recognised and quality-scored websites, prioritising fast and resilient websites in its search listings and results. Having experienced some reliability issues, we took the decision to move from a shared to a dedicated hosting environment, which was the only way to guarantee the availability of our web properties and safeguard our all important SEO," Russell continued.



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Call us : 0845 355 2000 - Email us : business@claranet.co.uk

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The solution

Claranet designed a fully managed dedicated hardware solution, which would see Claranet take responsibility for managing and maintaining the infrastructure and provide greater visibility of the performance of the environment at any given time. Migrating to the new dedicated environment meant that Attraction World could still scale the solution in line with the needs of the business, but was no longer affected by peaks and troughs in traffic as with the shared environment, granting more control and stability.

Russell continued: "In some ways, this was quite an old-school way of doing things – historically businesses would have a comms room with servers and required a lot of CapEx refresh as the kit became obsolete – but Claranet were able to offer a solution which, like the old virtual platform, was on a rental basis with no upfront capital outlay. We've now got a fully managed service, which means that we don't have to employ qualified network engineers - and Claranet takes on the burden of swapping out and keeping that infrastructure current and up to date."

Having moved over to the new platform, the solution evolved to incorporate all of Attraction World's core IT requirements, including email and communications services and disaster recovery – all underpinned by Claranet's core MPLS network, which serves to guarantee service availability. Attraction World worked with Claranet to build extra layers of resiliency into the solution, creating a hybrid environment. Claranet provides disaster recovery in a virtual environment, which runs alongside the managed hosted solution in their primary data centre.

The benefits

For Attraction World, the ability to source the different components of its IT estate from a single provider has significant benefits, improving service availability and providing a single line of accountability.

Russell concluded: "I've worked with multiple providers in a similar set up before, and it proved a real headache in terms of management and service delivery. When something goes wrong in that kind of set-up, each provider points the finger at the other, meaning that issues simply don't get resolved as quickly as they should. Working with one provider means that when there is a problem, accountability is clear and transparent. They need to take responsibility and fix the problem. It only takes a phone call to get through to technical experts and dedicated account managers, so issues are resolved immediately."

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Since the migration across to the new infrastructure, Attraction World has enjoyed significant business growth, owing, in part, to the agility facilitated by the platform.

"We've almost doubled our turnover since 2010, helped in no small way by the services Claranet provides us with," Russell continued. "All of the savings and efficiency gains that we have achieved with Claranet have enabled us to create a very strong business in a short amount of time. We are a very entrepreneurial business, meaning we need to be nimble and only plan the finite detail of what we are doing 3-6 months in advance, but we are only able to do that because we've got the right infrastructure behind us."

"From a financial point of view, it goes far beyond anything we could have hoped to achieve had we gone down the traditional route of buying physical infrastructure. We are able to avoid capital expenditure, get access to best-of-breed kit from Claranet and know that their experts are constantly managing our critical data and applications. The solution gives us more visibility as to how our infrastructure, web and database servers, and communications services are performing. This means we can identify bottlenecks and stresses on our networks, and prioritise areas of improvement. On top of that we have built in an extra layer of resilience with the disaster recovery solution, which certainly helps me sleep better at night."

For more information about Claranet services, and the benefits these deliver, go to: www.claranet.co.uk