INDUSTRY LEADING GUEST WIFI SOLUTIONS PROVIDER USES AWS AND DRAAS TO ADAPT TO RAPID GROWTH

About

A major guest WiFi provider delivers secure, high speed public internet connectivity for visitors of venues, museums, shopping centres and hundreds of NHS locations.

The company has grown rapidly in the last 12 months, and today it supports over 60,000 concurrent users of wireless networks in public spaces all over the UK.

Databarracks' AWS and DRaaS services have played a key role in helping the organisation rise to the many challenges of sudden expansion.

Databarracks

The Challenge

Demand for internet access across public spaces has never been stronger, and over the past few years, the guest WiFi provider has seen demand for its services skyrocket. Following the acquisition of several key customers, the company was poised to see significant growth in operations, turnover and personnel.

"After winning a key contract, there was a domino effect, and new business just kept coming in. We had to quickly expand our operations in every way in order to meet demand: more staff, bigger offices, and significant changes to our IT environment – both in the way we provision services to customers and our internal systems.

"Cumulatively, that's a lot of business change to cope with, but it also served as a catalyst to lay some firm foundations for the future, both in terms of business continuity, and our technology roadmap. Databarracks turned out to be an ideal partner in that regard."

The organisation's legacy continuity capabilities involved manual backup and recovery using physical media.

"We were using a combination of backup tapes to an offsite location, and taking manual snapshots of specific machines in our VM stack and saving them to a USB drive.

"It was suitable when the company was 4 people, but as we grew to 60 I knew we needed something more robust."

Up until its office move, the provider was also delivering services to end customers using in-house infrastructure, which presented a barrier to its growth ambitions.

"There are lots of different components to our core services, but for a time, we ran the whole software stack as a monolithic application, on one large box with tons of compute and memory. We got to the point where we could see the infrastructure creaking, and as you can imagine, that set-up left us with a pretty low ceiling in terms of scalability."

"We had three immediate requirements from our next infrastructure move. We needed to grow quickly to meet demand, ensure service continuity for existing customers and stay flexible enough to adapt to future changes. We knew with the right partner, AWS could meet those requirements, and that quickly turned out to be Databarracks."

The Solution

Databarracks provided two core services to help the guest WiFi provider scale up its business operations: an overhaul of its continuity systems to better protect back office systems, and the redesign and migration of its software stack to AWS.

DRaaS

Databarracks moved quickly to address the guest WiFi provider's DRaaS and AWS needs. With so much business change happening elsewhere, automation was a big priority around any new continuity capabilities.

"Outsourcing continuity is fairly unique in that it's simultaneously an operational requirement, but also absolutely critical to the survivability of the business. I wouldn't feel comfortable procuring that from just anyone. Databarracks is a continuity specialist."

After categorizing which systems were critical to the organisation's business continuity, Databarracks began replicating the corresponding virtual machines through Zerto to a parallel recovery environment.

"We've replaced a time-consuming manual process with something that ticks along quietly in the background, constantly monitored by a dedicated team. I'm now running quarterly tests with their assistance to ensure if we ever invoke, it'll work as intended."

AWS

The AWS element of the project was a longer process.

"Moving our operations onto the AWS platform wasn't a simple lift-and-shift job. Obviously we wanted to move things intelligently in order to consume AWS resources as efficiently as possible, but there was also a significant redesign piece around the way we'd architected the software stack. Essentially we were taking an application made for a single piece of tin and rebuilding it into a distributed, scalable and high-availability platform.

"From the first whiteboard planning session with the Databarracks AWS team, it was a very active partnership. We knew the project was going to be an involved process, and over the last 12 months Databarracks have helped us understand how to make our application excel using AWS resources and products.

"That meant breaking up historically interconnected service components in a coordinated fashion and redeploying them nondestructively across distributed cloud infrastructure. Databarracks helped us implement those changes and test how they run in the new environment."

Databarracks

The Benefits

"Databarracks were the perfect partner to address our quite specific needs during the last 12 months. The DRaaS rollout has been completely painless, and I've got full faith in the technical team to maintain a reliable recovery service that I can depend on. It's reassuring to know with certainty that every single employee can work effectively throughout disruption."

"For our customers and end users, fast, reliable and continual internet connectivity is no longer simply nice to have: it's an essential utility. Databarracks' ongoing assistance with AWS has been totally essential to ensuring we can deliver that at scale."

"Communication has been a crucial part of the service. I'm in contact with our technician, Paul Blake, at least once a day. The nature of the migration means we're still uncovering elements of change a year later. We changed 6 lines of code after our last release and it shot our CPU and load on certain instances through the roof. It's situations like that where Paul always makes time and acts quickly. It's refreshing to receive support from a managed service provider that doesn't come with caveats or limitations."

"It's not just an emergency line either. The whole team are helping ensure we continually consume resources in the most economical way possible.

They helped us separate our staging and production environments into two separate AWS accounts so we have more visibility into our billing, and they've helped us reduce the number of instances on our production platform from 40 down to 17. We're lean and effective, which is the ideal balance."

About Databarracks

Databarracks is the UK's specialist business continuity and IT disaster recovery provider.

In 2003, we launched one of the world's first true managed backup services to bring indestructible resilience to mission critical data.

Today, we deliver award winning data and continuity services from some of the most secure data centres in the world, 30 metres below ground in ex-military nuclear bunkers, supported 24/7/365 by our team of handpicked experts.

We make enterprise-class continuity, security and resilience accessible for organisations of all sizes.

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