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Richard Swann, Head of IT, Institute of Directors.

Looking for a solution

Based in Pall Mall, London, The Institute of Directors (IoD) is Europe’s largest membership organisation for business. The organisation supports over 45,000 members via a UK branch network of 44 regional locations and an international network spanning 6 continents. The IoD has operated for over 100 years and its success can be measured by the quality of its members, who are some of the most skilled and influential world leaders, from start-up entrepreneurs to directors in the public sector and CEOs of multinational organisations.

Whilst delivering exclusive benefits to its members, the IoD aims to provide a real return on investment, in helping companies to improve cost efficiency. Its highly regarded professional development programmes provide creative and flexible training opportunities, including the exclusive and industry-recognised qualification, Chartered Director. The IoD also offers a year-round active business programme, where members benefit from high profile networking events and integrated regional support.

The quality of communication with members and prospective members is at the heart of IoDs operation and is thus critical to success. As such, there is a high degree of emphasis placed on key IT applications such as the web site (www.iod.com) and the membership relationship management system. Visitors to the IoD website, whilst browsing the services, membership rewards and events, have the opportunity to interact with the IoD team via activities such as applying for membership, renewing existing memberships, booking courses, and reserving places at events.

Given the importance of the applications involved, successful testing is paramount in delivering functionality and performance to the user communities. The IoD was implementing a new suite of membership relationship management solutions to permit richer functionality to be delivered to visitors to the www.iod.com website. The system selected (Integra) was part way through implementation and functional testing, a key part of which was integration with the IoD web site.

While the core functional testing process was relatively well established, the additional integration elements and the introduction of new functionality meant that the performance of the overall website would be difficult to predict.

Finding an answer

The challenge was to test for the performance to be experienced by real users, in high volume and under differing connectivity scenarios taking into account IoD current and future business plans. Richard Swann, Head of IT at the IoD explains. “Testing in the local environment with selected users is important, but the real test is how the system behaves under stress. With the numbers of users and transactions expected, it was critical to prove the performance of the application under load before going live.”

In planning the project with Verify Solutions in a collaborative way, two key objectives were agreed. These were to address the initial concerns that the web site should support the existing current number of users with no tangible degradation in performance, with a second goal of, through using the appropriate tools and test designs, exploring the limits of the application and the supporting infrastructure, thereby determining the location of any performance bottlenecks.

The solution delivered a thorough load test of the system with the expected volumes of users, data and transactions, in conjunction with a rapid “deep dive” approach to any issues as they arose. The results provided specific detail and graphic evidence highlighting precisely from where within the system any suspected performance issues may arise. This level of detail enabled the IoD to focus remediation effort and ultimately to deliver the business assurance required relating to the system performance.

Richard continued, “Verify Solutions’ specialism in this area enabled their Consultants to identify the most appropriate testing tools and method, design a solution within the constraints and demands of the environment and to deliver the results quickly. Importantly, they quickly became part of our team and when performance anomalies were found, they rapidly focused on providing as much detail as possible to enable an immediate and long term resolution.”

“Performance of our systems is at the highest priority for us and we are always looking for ways to improve our delivery capability. To that end, we have already begun dialogue with Verify Solutions to explore other ways in which they can help us achieve our goals.”

Richard Swann, Head of IT, Institute of Directors

About Verify Solutions

Verify Solutions Limited use leading edge IT performance analysis technologies to help customers reduce cost and improve productivity. We allow our customers to resolve application quality, performance and scalability concerns rapidly and effectively.

It is our aim to improve the cost-effectiveness of application development and support and to reduce the level of risk associated with deploying and scaling those systems. We believe that the timely resolution of issues in business-critical software applications is key to the protection of an organisation’s productivity and profits.