

The genuine article



The 3rd Man

Card fraud is in the news on a daily basis. In the first six months of 2007 the UK's payment association APACS reported that card not present fraud increased by 44% to £137 million. This bank-reported loss is only the tip of an ever growing iceberg which is set to wreck companies' profitability and ruin the reputations of otherwise responsible traders.

The 3rd Man is Europe's leading specialist Card Not Present (CNP) Fraud Screening Company. Its business is to prevent online fraud by effectively screening the many elements of a transaction which in turn enables them accurately to detect fraud. Upon detection, The 3rd Man alerts its customers who prevent fulfilment and therefore remove the reward from fraudsters.

The challenges

The 3rd Man has grown explosively over the last 24 months and continues to deal with ever-increasing volumes of data processing requests. As the business has expanded, The 3rd Man's data processing needs have increased. In line with the industry data security standards, all data processing must remain secure and compliant at all times.

"Our growing customer base is continually increasing business and so we have an ongoing need to expand our technical capability and capacity," says Steve Tyas, Operations Director at The 3rd Man. "Our priorities remain to provide the highest levels of quality whilst maintaining security and building in resilience and fault tolerance throughout our network architecture.

"Our original hardware featured single core, CPU devices and a single power supply. If a server had failed we would have had to switch servers manually in order to maintain services. We switched to highly resilient, load balanced server architectures which can be relied upon to provide the levels of service demanded by major online retailers such as Halfords, Ticketmaster and JJB Sports. Businesses rely on our services to safeguard their clients around the clock, so providing maximum network uptime was vital," says Steve.

"When we asked Claranet to upgrade our network infrastructure we specified a tenfold increase in capacity to meet our demands as our customer base grew," continues Steve. "We needed a network that was fully scalable to cope with our expected growth.

"We also demanded the very highest standards of security and availability to ensure that we are compliant with the rigorous requirements of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) regulations. This year we not only met these criteria but attained the highest level of accreditation.

"Throughout the first three years of our relationship, Claranet had proved itself to be a technical partner that offered advice, ability and ambition," says Steve. "As we grew, it made sense to stick with a partner who fully understood our business needs."



The solution

To meet the particular needs of The 3rd Man, Claranet designed, implemented and managed an individually tailored, fully redundant managed hosting platform which addressed the key areas of network resilience, capacity and security, while remaining fully scalable to meet the company's projected growth.

"We worked closely with The 3rd Man to provide them with the technology that addressed their specific needs," says Paul Burton, Claranet's Presales Technical Consultant. "We built the new network in two parts: first, a primary site with high availability, best-of-breed hardware, including dual firewalls and multiple HP servers to eliminate potential single points of failure. Dual Foundry load balancers were installed to ensure that incoming traffic is handled in the most efficient way, by routing all traffic to an available server. To make the network as secure as possible we included Juniper Networks Netscreen firewalls coupled with a High Availability demarcation zone (DMZ). This allows controlled access to The 3rd Man's external services, while adding an additional layer of security to the company's other networks."

"A second disaster recovery (DR) site was also created, providing almost-instantaneous switchover should the first site fail. The second DR site decreased the amount of potential downtime that The 3rd Man would receive if there were a catastrophic datacentre failure."

"To support The 3rd Man during their PCI DSS accreditation, we deployed disaster recovery multi-server architecture hosted at Claranet's Global Switch 2 and Teleticity datacentres. These measures, coupled with comprehensive security appliances to cope with higher throughput demand; and more storage capacity for their databases, ensuring that the client remained compliant with the new financial regulations," continues Paul. "Because The 3rd Man is an expanding business, we ensured that we can simply add new servers when needed, without disrupting the network."

"We were impressed with Claranet's quality of service," says Steve Tyas. "We chose them over their competitors because they took a consultative approach to building the network. They were very flexible in their approach to the work and they took care to understand our specific needs, especially with regard to PCI DSS. They provided us with a dedicated account manager for whom no challenge was too much trouble. We were always confident that the rest of the organisation supported him in delivering our infrastructure."

The result

The infrastructure provided by Claranet has been instrumental in The 3rd Man's ability to support their extraordinary growth over the last two years. The company now hosts SuperSearch, the National CNP Fraud File which enables retailers to share data with security and anonymity to help in combating fraud. The sheer size of this database demands an IT infrastructure that ensures the highest levels of availability, capacity and resilience.

"SuperSearch is a major weapon in the fight against fraud," says Steve Tyas. "It is proving hugely beneficial to all that participate and is saving retailers around £10 million a month. When one retailer reports suspicious activity, others benefit. Our customers rely on us to provide security and peace of mind. We similarly need technology partners who can support us in doing so. We are delighted to say that we found that partner in Claranet."

For further information, please visit :

www.the3rdman.co.uk

www.clara.net