

Case
study



**PROTECT
THE
HUMAN**

Amnesty International

Amnesty International moves to Claranet's private cloud

claranet
www.claranet.co.uk

For more information :

claranet.co.uk - twitter.com/claranet

To book an appointment or to discuss our cloud services :

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

Amnesty International moves to Claranet's private cloud

The challenge

As a campaigning organisation, Amnesty is dependent on acquiring and retaining members, encouraging activism, and facilitating campaigning activity. Its online presence and digital communications strategy is central to helping the organisation achieve all these things. The charity gathers real-time news and information via video, blogs and forum updates, posted by individuals around the world, as and when acts that breach human rights occur. This allows Amnesty to respond straight away, communicating news and updates to its members and online communities in order to organise protests, petitions and forums designed to support its campaigns. Having the right hosting platform in place to support its digital communications strategy is therefore fundamental to the charity's success.

Before partnering with Claranet, Amnesty worked with several web and hosting agencies, each responsible for a different part of its online properties, and each with different service levels. This was problematic for Amnesty's digital team, as it led to everything being done in silos, and was complicated to manage. It also exposed the organisation to significant instability and risk; if one of the third parties were to go under, or a dispute arise, it would have been easy for them to simply turn off Amnesty's website. "We couldn't continue operating with this threat, and needed to consolidate our providers to gain back control over our hosting platform," said Kamesh Patel, Head of IT at Amnesty International UK.

In addition, because of this complex hosting environment, user data wasn't integrated across the organisation's various properties. It meant that the charity had poor visibility of its users' profiles and their activity online, and limited the way Amnesty could interact with them.

"With access to information about our users, we would be able to support their journey to the Amnesty website and, once there, ensure they had access to the content and resources they needed. This in turn would help us encourage and facilitate campaigning activity amongst all our users."

Kamesh Patel - Head of IT - **Amnesty International UK**

The organisation also wanted to be able to focus on its groups (users and members assigned a group based on their profiles and interests), and to drive more supporters to the Amnesty website. To better engage with both its users and groups, Amnesty required a hosting platform that would allow it to develop the applications and tools needed to provide enhanced data analytics.

claranet
www.claranet.co.uk



About Amnesty International

Amnesty International was founded in the UK in 1961, on the belief in the power of ordinary people to make extraordinary change. Since then, the principles of impartiality and independence have been central to this international non-governmental organisation.

Initially, Amnesty International's emphasis was on the protection of the human rights of prisoners of conscience, and members would campaign for these individuals anywhere in the world. As Amnesty grew, its focus expanded to include other victims of human rights abuses - such as torture, 'disappearances' and the death penalty.

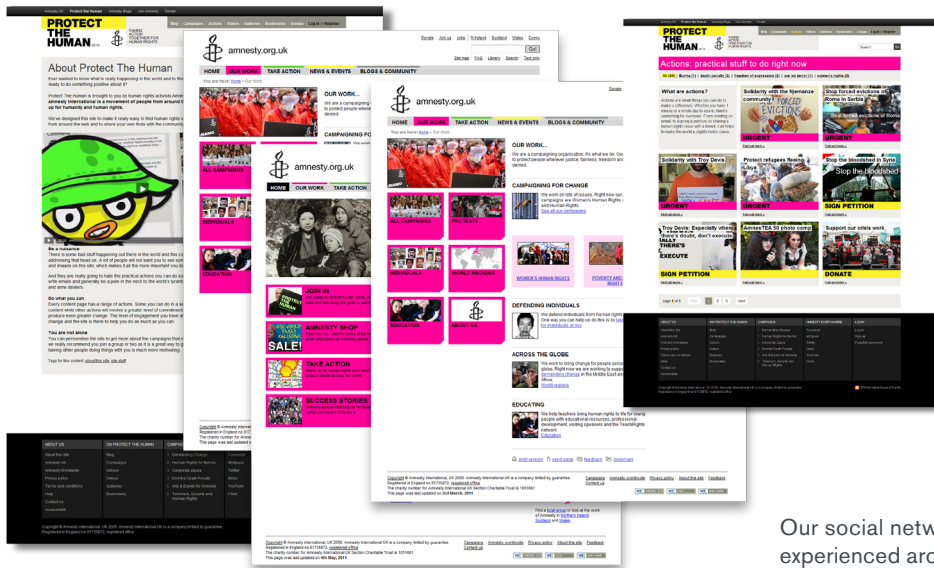
Today, Amnesty is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. Its work is based on careful research by volunteers, and on the human rights standards agreed by the international community. Amnesty International UK (Amnesty) raises £10.4 million annually via its fundraising channels, and is one of more than 50 nationally organised sections that make up the Amnesty International worldwide movement.

Laying the foundations

To drive its digital strategy, Amnesty's digital team embarked on an ambitious three-year project to overhaul its hosting platform. This project would involve the consolidation and re-engineering of Amnesty's hosting infrastructure, and aimed to fully integrate all its online properties, and to provide enhanced data analytics, as well as much greater functionality for users. Other objectives included simplifying the management of the platform and eliminating other inefficiencies, and improving the reliability and flexibility of the online infrastructure.

After a competitive pitch, Amnesty chose Claranet's managed application hosting solution to underpin its technology transformation. Patel explains the reasons behind the selection: "Claranet offered the most comprehensive solution, with an SLA that covered the whole service and guaranteed application availability. We wanted to dramatically streamline our hosting platform and it was clear that Claranet's all-encompassing SLA and single point-of-contact would help us to do this."

Amnesty International moves to Claranet's private cloud



The results

The first phase of the project, completed in 2009, involved the implementation of the managed application hosting platform - to support the www.amnesty.org website and the organisation's central registration system. Since implementing Claranet's flexible and resilient hosting platform, Amnesty has been able to add further functionality to its websites. For example, members can now log in using a single username and password - a function that was not previously possible. On top of this, Amnesty now offers a self-service function to users wanting to access its resource system; for example, once users visit the Amnesty website, they can become members by signing up online. Amnesty is also looking to enable members to set up direct debits themselves.

"Before Claranet's hosting platform was in place, any e-commerce - where our members request information packs, CDs and other materials, or set up direct debits - had to be fulfilled manually as our website and applications couldn't support this capability," said Patel. "Claranet has helped us to simplify our back-end processes and to automate fulfillment, so that our staff can get on with more important things like building additional functionality to support our next campaign. This has helped us tremendously to stay ahead of the game."

Moving to the cloud

For the second phase of its IT revamp, Amnesty is embracing social media tools and changing the content management system (CMS) on which its website is built. According to Patel, this has made the ability to flex, as online capacity requirements change, even more important, and has prompted the move to a new hosting platform, Claranet's dedicated virtualised hosting platform (DVH or private cloud).

By moving to Claranet's private cloud service, Amnesty now has in place the foundations to support its constantly changing requirements. "For example," says Patel, "we recently ran a campaign highlighting Shell's appalling human rights record in Nigeria, and using donations, had bought an ad in the Financial Times. At the last minute, however, the ad was pulled by the FT, infuriating campaigners. As a result, our blogosphere went completely crazy.

Our social networking site www.protectthehuman.com experienced around 400 blog entries that day; compared to between 20 and 40 entries on an average day. Despite the huge spike in demand, our websites didn't crash. Claranet's virtualised platform meant that our server resources could be dynamically allocated to where they were needed. This ensured that our websites could cope with the unexpected demand, and that we were able to provide a smooth online experience for our users. And it continues to do this today."

A dedicated cloud platform also enables Amnesty to avoid downtime. "From a business continuity and disaster recovery perspective, the virtual platform really delivers," comments Patel. Amnesty no longer needs to experience server downtime when making a physical upgrade to its IT infrastructure; and should something happen to one server, the intelligence in the platform allows resource to be reallocated automatically, ensuring continued uptime. "We also now have peace of mind knowing that, no matter what, an unknown third party supplier can't turn off the website - everything is securely managed in Claranet's cloud environment."

Conclusion

The third and final phase of Amnesty's digital strategy involves the launch of a revamped Amnesty International website in late 2011. This will mark the end of the three-year project in which, thanks to Claranet, the charity's hosting infrastructure has been consolidated, simplified, and made more flexible and reliable. And through enhanced data analytics and online functionality, Amnesty has been able to better engage its members.

According to Patel, Claranet's private cloud infrastructure will continue to be the foundation that underpins Amnesty's digital communications strategy. The realisation of this strategy will help Amnesty to continue to fulfill its mission. ■

For more information about Amnesty International, please go to: www.amnesty.org.uk

For more information :

claranet.co.uk - twitter.com/claranet

To book an appointment or to discuss our cloud services :

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