Nominee: Claranet Ltd

Nomination title: Claranet demonstrates speed, agility and efficiency in project for Missguided

What was the driving force behind the project – what business or technology challenge needed to be addressed?

Missguided is a 'rapid fashion' multi-channel brand, aimed at the 16-25 female market. Started from scratch in 2008 by Nitin Passi, who still owns 100 per cent of the business, it recorded turnover of £87.2m in 2014/15. It has enjoyed rapid growth in the UK and has subsequently expanded its operations into Australia, France, USA, Germany, and Spain. The company's long-term mission is to transform the successful medium-sized business into a global fashion brand.

Missguided has achieved its rapid growth off the back of a strategy that is rooted in speed and agility. Its target audience has a taste for the latest fashion trends and makes purchasing decisions spontaneously, with most orders on Missguided's websites being for next-day delivery. Missguided's success is built on its ability to offer a lot of fresh styles – it replaces approximately 25 per cent of its range every month – and to deliver a fast, seamless experience for its customers.

Part of its go-to-market strategy has involved the launch of collaborative fashion lines and flash sale events, which can create a rapid upsurge in traffic and orders, and place pressure on the website. When Missguided launched a collaborative range with fashion and beauty influencer Carli Bybel on 19th July 2016, the site immediately experienced 47 times normal peak traffic in a four minute period and couldn't cope. Missguided had predicted this and activated a visitor prioritisation system, limiting traffic to 20 per cent which meant the site didn't fail, but customers were not as satisfied as they could have been. This risked hurting sales and damaging the brand.

When Missguided met Claranet, the retailer was working with a provider utilising a traditional hosting model from a single data centre, with lots of single points of failure, creating risks for the business. With ambitious goals for global growth, this arrangement was no longer suitable: Missguided required scalable and flexible infrastructure that could grow with the company and seamlessly accommodate sudden surges in traffic and orders on the website.

How did the solution address the challenges and were there any particularly innovative aspects that made it stand out?

John Allen, CTO at Missguided said: "We recognised that a cloud solution hosted in AWS would address the load, flexibility and adaptability issues. AWS recommended that we talk to Claranet, an AWS Premier Partner who had seen through similar transitions on our technology stack, which includes Magento. We quickly found that Claranet had a very good story to tell, with real world case studies, which clearly demonstrated clear understanding of the platform. They also had the specific expertise and skills necessary, and a common understanding of what a business like ours needs to be successful."

Claranet successfully migrated approximately 170 servers into AWS, and moved the whole system onto a completely different architecture. All bandwidth and availability issues had been designed out of the solution and the single points of failure were removed. A new disaster recovery system was also implemented.

When the Claranet team flipped the proverbial switch at 1 am on a Thursday night, they ensured that they had the means in place to combat any potential incidents rapidly and effectively. Claranet's ongoing support system monitors memory usage, CPU usage, and other relevant metrics. Should these metrics reach a certain value, the system automatically raises and reports an incident.

What major challenges were faced during the project and how were they overcome?

Initially, the Missguided team wanted to accomplish the transition within 12 weeks. However, due to the fast-moving nature of Missguided's business, key product launch events subsequently drove them into making it happen a lot faster. Claranet managed to complete the migration in half the time, migrating the servers into AWS and moving the system onto its new architecture within six weeks.

This challenge was a key indicator of Claranet's suitability for such a project: in order to meet Missguided's rapidly changing requirements, they needed an agile partner which could scale up the speed of its implementation procedures in order to get the job done on time.

What tangible benefits has the organisation seen as a result of the project's implementation?

The benefits of the new solution for both Missguided and its customers were immediately obvious. Carli Bybel and Missguided made a commitment to relaunch their collaborative range almost immediately after the first launch sold out. The whole process was re-run on 25th August on the new AWS system, with an almost identical upsurge in traffic (around 45 times normal peak load). This time, however, the system was able to take every single order as it arose; there was no need to deploy the queueing system nor to delay any order processing.

The migration to AWS has also allowed Missguided to move onto the Amazon Aurora database engine, taking its maximum database throughput from 2 million transactions a minute to well in excess of 5 million. This has had a direct effect on revenue, as it allows the website to take all orders without avoidance during its critical high-intensity moments.

John commented: "Claranet's dedication to getting skilled people onsite to understand our requirements and ensure the migration process went well was impressive. I've done a number of these migrations over the years, around 14 at my last count, and although there were issues this was definitely the slickest data centre move I've ever done. The work they've done to move us onto a scalable platform has had a direct impact on the focus of the Missguided team.

"As a result of a successful transition, with the help of Claranet, we have already started deploying new trading platforms and back-office systems in AWS. To scale up used to take us anything between four and six weeks to add in servers. We can now do that in literally seconds. Claranet were able to take us on that journey and they've got a lot of experience in that area. We've now reached a point where strategically we've decided to push as much as possible onto the AWS platform, preferably everything one day, and Claranet are continuing to help us to do that. This relationship has really moved the business forward and it's set us up for something much bigger in the future."

To hear more, please visit https://www.claranet.co.uk/case-studies/missguided-drives-accelerated-growth-aws-and-claranet

Why nominee should win

• **Completed a 12-week project in just six weeks, demonstrating exceptional agility and flexibility**

• **Proven success: when faced with its next surge in web traffic, Missguided was able to handle the increased demand**

• **Increased database throughput from 2 million transactions per minute to well in excess of 5 million thanks to swift migration to Amazon Aurora**

• **Fully scalable: move to AWS has enabled Missguided to deploy new platforms much faster than before**

• **Ongoing support: Claranet's commitment to a high-quality service goes well beyond the initial implementation, with Missguided now being assisted in embarking on even more ambitious projects**