

Company:

IEB Trading (cheapsmells.com)

Industry:

e-commerce

Website:

www.cheapsmells.com

Solution:

Web servers, database servers,
load balancers, Cisco firewalls and
Webcelerator

Profile:

An e-commerce business trading
as cheapsmells.com – a seller of
genuine, high-quality fragrances,
hair care and skin care lines
primarily to the UK market at duty-
free prices.

**Overview**

A retailer with a purely online offer relies on a fast and robust web host to allow it to compete in a fiercely competitive market. IEB Trading approached UKFast with a requirement for a server solution that could handle the growth it predicted in the future after its previous hosting provider failed to cater for its changing needs.

Providing a two-server set-up in 2008, UKFast has reacted to IEB's growth and success, developing a bespoke solution that includes multiple web and database servers, load balancers, and firewalls.

Most recently, UKFast and IEB Trading worked together to successfully fend off a DDoS attack that threatened to affect the performance of the company's flagship e-commerce site.

Webcelerator was able to deal with the increased traffic, leaving the firewalls to perform as normal. UKFast's Webcelerator product performed so well that IEB plans to rely on its capabilities during its peak Christmas season.

Situation

IEB Trading had grown its primary business – www.cheapsmells.com – for four years when it approached UKFast with a requirement for a robust server set-up that would not only cope with its current demands but offer the flexibility to adapt in line with its continued success.

The Guernsey-based business sells high quality, genuine perfumes and hair and skincare lines at lower than duty free prices. Since its formation in 2004 it has "gone from strength to strength", serving customers in the UK and abroad through its online outlet.

Stuart Ferguson, IEB's web director, says: "Our business is purely online – there's no bricks and mortar stores at all so the speed and performance that our web host provides is crucial.

"The relationship with our previous web host wasn't working well – we had drop outs in service because of the amount of traffic we were pushing through so they weren't able to support our ongoing needs.

"We approached UKFast looking for speed, stability and experience but also the ability to react quickly."

UKFast's solutions architects developed a bespoke solution proposal that would handle IEB's current performance and incorporated the flexibility necessary to cope with its predictions for growth.

"We asked for something that could handle at least four times the traffic we were getting at the time so the UKFast guys designed an entire solution for us that met all of our criteria. It was an incredibly easy process for us," Ferguson says.

"Webcelerator has done more than fend off a potentially damaging DDoS attack. It has given us the capability to expand even further without having to invest in more kit."

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- Robust and reliable e-commerce web hosting
- Four server solution, scaled to handle growth
- Innovative solution implemented to cope with DDoS traffic
- Webcelerator will be used to handle future traffic spikes
- Close relationship with UKFast as a trusted advisor



Solution

In line with its predictions, IEB's growth quickly justified the expansion of its hosting solution to include four primary web servers and database servers, two load balancers and a pair of firewalls.

"The growth of our solution has tracked the growth of the business. Any time we get anywhere near reaching our capacity or we expect peaks in traffic, we get in touch with UKFast's technical team and increase the capabilities of the solution. It's an incredibly bespoke and responsive service."

In Summer 2011 one of IEB's smaller branches suffered from a DDoS attack that threatened to impact IEB's flagship site.

"Several domains that exist in the same market were all being attacked by a very similar DDoS system which was effectively destroying the firewall," Ferguson explains.

"It overloaded the network and our Cisco firewalls were oversubscribed – potentially affecting cheapsmells.com and taking everything offline.

"We shut down the affected branch and destroyed the IP which allowed us to revive all of our other services. We spoke to UKFast's tech guys and on their recommendation implemented Webcelerator in front of our firewalls.

"We were able to turn the site back on and the Webcelerator was able to deal with the traffic filtering almost entirely, leaving the firewalls completely open to deal with the traffic that they should have been dealing with.

"The response was fantastic. Within eight hours we had destroyed one IP with the rest of the sites completely unaffected."

"In this industry, if your site doesn't load in 30 – 50 seconds you're dead in the water. The speed of our sites is impressive."

"The tech team's responses are absolutely second to none at UKFast."

Benefits

Ferguson says Webcelerator has given IEB the capability to expand even further without having to invest in more kit.

It plans to use the web acceleration technology during the festive season when IEB makes more than 50 percent of its annual sales.

"If we didn't know what Webcelerator was capable of, we would have had to put in another web server and possibly another database server to cope with the amount of traffic we get in the last quarter of the year. The Webcelerator means we won't have to do that."

IEB operates in a fiercely competitive industry where speed and performance determine a business's success or failure. A successful DDoS attack and resulting downtime could cost an e-commerce site, like IEB, many thousands of pounds.

Ferguson says: "Speed and uptime is very important to us. If the site isn't there our customers can't buy from us and they will go to a competitor.

"We have external monitoring programmes that show us that even our sites that deal with Turkey, France and over 100 places across the world load very quickly – especially compared to our previous host."

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