Context Optional Success Story

ContextOptional
THE SOCIAL MARKETING COMPANY

Context Optional is the leading provider of social marketing software and services to global brands and advertising agencies. Its solution powers many of Facebook's fastest growing branded application campaigns, many of which grow to millions of unique visitors within months of deployment.

Context Optional helps brands like Microsoft, Target and Toyota become social network insiders. The company provides brand marketing teams with a complete social marketing solution that includes the creative development and implementation of compelling social applications as well as the necessary tools and services required to manage their campaigns across social networking platforms such as Facebook. In support of Context Optional, Joyent provides the underlying cloud infrastructure that enables viral campaigns to scale at Facebook levels.

The Challenge

When Context Optional's technical team considered whether to build or outsource the infrastructure needed to run its clients' viral social applications three years ago, they knew that buying, racking and running compute, storage and network to meet stringent service level agreements and customer expectations wasn't a core competence they wanted to invest in. Instead, they wanted to focus their efforts on making their Fortune 500 clients successful in the up-and-coming social media space.

Going to the cloud was the obvious decision. But in choosing a cloud provider Context Optional had a number of stringent requirements it needed met, including:

Scaling at Facebook Level. For brands striving to engage with Facebook's and other social networks' massive audiences, the ability to scale at Facebook levels was crucial. A successful campaign could require infrastructure to support millions of users within the first months of launch. In addition, campaign teams often couldn't predict how viral – and by extension, how successful - a social application would be, so the ability to scale infrastructure inline with real time demand was crucial.

Vertical Bursting. Not only does a viral campaign need the ability to scale horizontally by adding more instances, but also momentary spikes in traffic workload can benefit through vertical bursting. Context Optional would not have to over provision another instance, when there is enough resources on a currently under-utilized core to handle the short term burst in traffic.

Persistent Database. Context Optional needed the ability to run a persistent database. Since campaigns could last for multiple years, the team needed database instances to run uninterrupted for at least one to two years.

Timely Professional Support. The viral nature of social media campaigns meant that infrastructure had to work around the clock. If there were any issues or questions, Context Optional needed the ability to get answers quickly. Users of social network applications couldn't be expected to wait while Context Optional waited for a support ticket to get resolved.

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Choosing the right infrastructure partner to deliver high volume brand campaigns on Facebook can make or break client satisfaction. Therefore, Context Optional needed a cloud provider it could count on. And for the past three years, Context Optional has counted on Joyent.

"With Joyent we get the best of both worlds. On one hand, Joyent delivers the world class infrastructure for Facebook scale applications. On the other hand, we get a partner we know and can call directly when we have questions or issues that need quick resolution."

Rafi Jacoby
Director of R&D

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CUSTOMER PROFILE

Company: Context Optional

Segment: Advertising and social media

Locations: US, Europe and Asia

The Solution

Context Optional understood it needed a world-class cloud infrastructure partner to meet the demands of its clients' social marketing applications. That partner for the past three years has been Joyent.

Joyent's solution provided Context Optional the following benefits:

No Worry Scale. Context Optional leaves the challenge of running the underlying compute, storage and network to Joyent, with confidence they can start instances and they will just work. In addition, IT operations no longer have to worry about buying enough infrastructure ahead of a launch just in case a campaign goes viral. They can simply add SmartMachines as demand grows and shut them down as demand subsides.

Local and Persistent Databases. Context Optional can start a database and be assured that it will run for extended periods. In fact, some of Context Optional's client databases have been running for well over a year and continue to run with zero down time. In addition, Joyent provides local persistent databases, versus something network-based. This means fast reload should a database instance need to be rebooted.

Vertical Bursting. Many cloud providers can burst horizontally by adding more instances. Joyent, on the other hand, allows vertical bursting. This means an application is not constrained within the defined computational constraints of a hypervisor image while spare cycles on the underlying core go unused. Rather, applications can utilize all available resources on a particular compute node. This ability to vertically burst helps Context Optional scale by providing headroom to handle momentary spikes in workload. The result is that application users don't experience frustrating delays as popularity grows, while Context Optional doesn't have to over-provision through unneeded horizontal scale.

High Touch Professional Support. With Joyent, Context Optional gets the best of both worlds. Joyent operates a true Infrastructure-as-a-Service cloud, and provides support like a managed hosting provider. This means Context Optional not only reaps benefits from cloud computing, but also has real relationships with real people who can answer the real questions that inevitably come up.

Industry Leadership. Joyent is known to be one of the leaders in cloud computing. This is not only important for delivering on performance, availability and security, but Context Optional's clients can rest assured that their data processing needs are being handled by a cloud leader.