Exit Games

Exit Games Empowers Multi-Player Online Game Development
With Bare Metal Servers From Softlayer, an IBM Company.

Exit Games runs its Photon multi-player game development cloud on SoftLayer bare metal servers, keeping 70 million gamers playing every month, and empowering developers to work on the next big thing.

Setting the Stage

The gaming industry occupies a diverse range of platforms—including smartphones, social media pages, traditional PCs, and specialized consoles. This makes the market for digital entertainment bigger and more complex than ever. That paired with the popularity of social media and increasingly available connectivity, collaborative or multi-player gaming has become a lucrative proposition.

In order to take advantage of this huge opportunity for growth, game developers need to be able to create quality multi-player experiences, ranging in complexity from two-player chess to massive multi-player online games (MMOGs). They must design and build these games, as well as deliver them on a reliable, scalable platform so that players have positive gaming experiences, regardless of where they are in the world or what medium they are using.

In 2009, Exit Games created the Photon Cloud, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) for multi-player game development and hosting.

The SaaS model makes the platform accessible for even independent ('indie'), startup, or student game developers, giving them access to the same tools as the larger studios. To date, more than 130,000 game developers are registered on the platform worldwide, and more than 70 million users play games hosted on the Photon Cloud every month, making it world's largest gaming cloud.

"We wanted to make multi-player game development simple," says Christof Wegmann, founder and CTO of Exit Games. "In the past, these types of games have been the preserve of the larger development companies as they had the resources to spend on this highly complex type of game. We wanted to create a solution not only for them, but also for the thousands of one-man-bands and small game development studios that also have great ideas and lots of creativity."

Challenge

Keeping 70 million users happy is not a simple task. Exit Games has a responsibility to its game developers to provide a reliable and highly available cloud service that will keep up with high levels of demand.

EXIT GAMES

Industry
Gaming, Game Development, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality

Challenge
Exit Games wanted to create a highly available, scalable, and reliable SaaS platform for multi-player game development and hosting around the world.

Why SoftLayer, an IBM Company
Bare metal servers from SoftLayer provide the availability, flexibility, network throughput, and performance that game developers expect, and come with the dedicated support that Exit Games needs.

WHAT EXIT GAMES ACHIEVED WITH SOFTLAYER

- 40 percent better performance than virtual server-based cloud hosting
- A tenth the cost of comparable cloud platforms
- Ability to provision new bare metal servers globally in under four hours

Cloud Built to Perform

SOFTLAYER
an IBM Company

If players are unable to access their favorite game or experience lag, they'll stop playing, generally convinced it was the game developer's fault. To avoid such complaints, the Photon Cloud's availability is critical to its customers' success and reputation.

Exit Games must also ensure its platform offers the scalability and flexibility needed to incorporate new features and capabilities as gaming technology evolves.

"The hottest thing in gaming right now is the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR)," explains Wegmann. "We're constantly adding new software developer kits (SDKs) to support the new trends so that our customers can keep creating innovative games that will grab players' attention."

Wegmann and his team had a clear idea of how to address these challenges, "We knew we wanted to host our Photon Cloud on bare metal servers rather than virtual machines," he adds. "In our tests we found that bare metal was the ideal platform for game development as we'd get greater memory, processing power and network throughput from dedicated servers. However, we still needed the right partner."

Solution and Results

After assessing a number of options, Exit Games chose to use bare metal servers from SoftLayer.

"We were impressed that we could provision new servers very quickly with SoftLayer, and we could have new resources up and running in under four hours, as opposed to the up-to ten days it could take with other bare metal providers," says Wegmann. "We found that we could not only achieve 40 percent better performance, but also at 10 times less than we would have had to pay for any of the popular cloud platforms."

While the numbers were compelling, Exit Games was also looking for a qualitative benefit from its migration to bare metal.

"Quality of service was very important for us," says Wegmann. "We need to respond fast when one of our customers has a request or a problem, so we needed our cloud provider to accommodate that. With SoftLayer, there's always someone at the end of the phone if we need them, and the team does all they can to help us get our developers what they need, when they need it."

This positive impact on the developers'—and ultimately, the game players'—experiences is vital.

"Our customers range from the largest game development houses such as SquareEnix to individuals just starting out. They all expect 100 percent availability and excellent customer service though, and we can't afford to let them down," Wegmann says.

The partnership with SoftLayer also looks set to play a strategic role in the future for Exit Games.

"We're able to tell our customers that their games are hosted on an industry-leading cloud platform with great performance, connectivity, and scalability," explains Wegmann. "This gives them peace of mind, and makes our proposition to the market stronger. We're also looking to leverage the partnership in our work with AR and VR, as we see some synergies with IBM Cloud in this area."

The Photon Cloud is now hosted entirely on bare metal, using hundreds of SoftLayer servers spread across multiple data centers globally. This positions the company to grow its customer and user bases as it incorporates new features and SDKs, and as it expands into new areas.

"Multiplayer gaming is booming everywhere, but especially in Asia," says Wegmann. "We're really excited about all the creative potential embodied by our developer community and we can't wait to see what they come up with next. We're proud to be able to say we're playing a role in their success."

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- CHRISTOF WEGMANN, FOUNDER AND CTO, EXIT GAMES

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