Before launching a new game on Facebook, gaming company KUULUU needed to test infrastructure performance to ensure all potential traffic issues were addressed that the production release would provide best-of-breed gaming experience.

Founded in 2011 in Basel, Switzerland, KUULUU, an interactive entertainment company, creates social games for leading artists, celebrities, and communities, enabling them to add new value to their brands, increase their footprint on social networks, and strengthen relationships with their fan bases. The company specializes in developing social, Web, and mobile games. Together with band Linkin Park, the studio created the social game “RECHARGE”—a third-person 3-D online experience (3D Unity technology) that combines puzzle, adventure and action elements.

The Unpredictable Nature of Gaming

Launching an online social media game comes with the highest volatility in requirements and usage. Factors like the popularity of the game, which can spike dramatically overnight, the amount of simultaneous players and their geographical locations, device used, time of the day, or even the weather outside impact the setup of infrastructure needed to respond to the changes.

Gamers expect a high-performance, always-on, graphically attractive, and seamless experience. Anything less—considering the growing field of competing options—and they will spend their time and money elsewhere. In terms of infrastructure, a company like KUULUU faces a challenge of avoiding over-commitment, which can lead to freezing cash in unutilized resources. It also faces the risk of under-investment, where the fans may be unable to play while waiting for extra infrastructure build out.

KUULUU understood that producing and running RECHARGE as a Facebook game would be especially resource-intensive. They also recognized the temporality and unpredictability of the infrastructure requirements, may it be for beta testing, launch, daily play, or update downloads. Different stages of production and tiers of architecture require different infrastructure, including a variety of different servers, scalable storage systems, firewalls, load balancers, and network capacities.

KUULUU wanted their internal IT resources to focus on game development, so they looked for a partner who could provide a flexible, scalable, and robust platform to adjust to the needs of this dynamic environment without hefty entry/exit fees and written-in-stone, long-term commitments.

Ready for Success

To compete, KUULUU must deliver the ultimate user experience. Since infrastructure utilization by games can dramatically swing back and forth, computing platforms must be ready and able to quickly respond to changes in demand and cost-effectively support all extremes.

The company chose SoftLayer, an IBM Company, to provide its infrastructure needs. For open beta, KUULUU started...
with bare metal cloud in SoftLayer’s data center in Amsterdam. Dedicated single tenant machines provide KUULUU with solid base for testing the environment before it globally goes live with RECHARGE. If KUULUU decides to move or add architecture in Singapore or Washington, or any other SoftLayer data center, it won’t be a problem as all the facilities are built using a unique pod concept, which is an important factor for a game with an international audience. Each pod supports up to 5,000 servers and is functionally independent, with distinct and redundant resources. The data centers are all connected via private, 10 Gigabit point-to-point connections, ensuring seamless, high-speed and high-performance integration. On top of it, SoftLayer provides KUULUU with CDN solution allowing the content to be placed closest to users, decreasing the latency even more.

“SoftLayer is able to get us all the performance and bandwidth that we need in an extremely flexible way that suits our industry and our product requirements,” said Florian Juergs, CEO for KUULUU. “On our side, we can do everything possible to develop an amazing game experience, but you do need partners that can support it. SoftLayer is that partner. On top of it, SoftLayer provides us with excellent service and very experienced advice.”

Like all SoftLayer customers, KUULUU didn’t have to sign a long term contract. Being billed in a pay-as-you-go model helps the company avoid capital outlays and better align ongoing expense with actual needs.

KUULUU is also protected from downtime, which is unacceptable in online gaming experience, as SoftLayer uses equipment and management processes designed for reliability as well as for disaster recovery. The company also gets full control over its environment, including critical tools such as load balancers, firewalls, and the like to ensure secure, optimized traffic delivery.

Addressing specific requirements, KUULUU has a choice of public, private, and bare metal cloud, deployed in minutes for virtual cloud instances and 2-4 hours for dedicated servers. If CPU-intensive gaming algorithms are used, they can be accommodated on-the-fly by multi-server clusters. For a game offered globally, the mesh network connecting all data centers will help guarantee a high-performance, high-speed experience.

By trusting SoftLayer for its infrastructure needs, KUULUU increases the chance for RECHARGE to become massive success, being able to concentrate on their core mission and taking the fear of incorrect situation prediction away from the equation.