



# TicketDirect embraces the cloud to provide the best customer experience

## The Business Case:

TicketDirect needed a system to handle the peak system loads during major events, but also manage costs when the demand is reduced.

## The Business Value:

- >> Cloud services can scale up or down when needed
- >> The cloud provides consumption-based billing
- >> Large volumes of ticketing demand can be handled easily
- >> Business growth and increased activity can be supported seamlessly

## The Engine Room:

- >> Windows Azure
- >> SQL Azure
- >> Windows Azure AppFabric
- >> Silverlight

## TicketDirect

### THE SITUATION

TicketDirect began as an event ticketing solutions provider in 1999, providing ticketing services to Carisbrook stadium in Dunedin, and has since grown into a major national event ticketing agency. To support further international growth, TicketDirect needed to find a new business platform."

By its very nature, TicketDirect is familiar with peaks and troughs in business demand and traffic. The challenge had been to handle peak system loads during major events, and to manage costs when the demand is reduced. By looking to the cloud, and to the Microsoft Windows Azure platform specifically, TicketDirect found a solution that offered unprecedented scalability, reduced cost and increased operational agility - while also delivering the best possible customer experience.

### THE PAIN

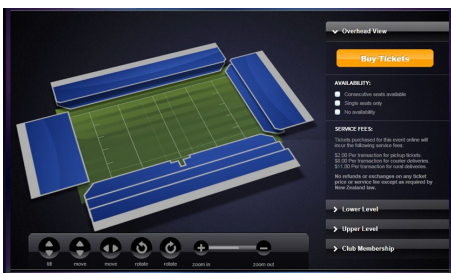
TicketDirect wanted to improve its ability to sell tickets quickly, and to better manage the highly elastic peak loads commonly seen when big events go on sale.

Matthew Davey, founder of TicketDirect, explains: "The problem in the ticketing business is that we have highly variable load patterns, so we have highly elastic needs. We can be selling a few hundred tickets an hour for most of the week, but when a big event goes on sale at nine in the morning, we get an enormous spike in load against our applications. Handling such widely variable demand in a cost-effective way has been an industry challenge.

"Traditionally it has been a very difficult, if not impossible, problem to solve. It requires the ability to dramatically increase your capacity for a very short period of time," Davey says. "To manage those demand spikes ourselves, we'd need to purchase a large number of servers, which would be lying idle most of the time [when there is not demand for tickets]. This would be a huge waste of money and resources for hardware, rack space, electricity, and the personnel to maintain it."

## TicketDirect

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### Enter "the cloud" and Microsoft Windows Azure

Working with Intergen and Microsoft to realise their vision, TicketDirect identified the need to invest in a cloud-hosted computing platform. The Windows Azure platform is an internet-scale cloud services platform that is hosted in Microsoft data centres. It provides an operating system and a set of services that can be used individually or together. Windows Azure also proved attractive because of its scalable infrastructure and pay-as-you-go model.

The desire for excellent customer service was paramount – without breaking the bank.

"We want to give the public a scalable, reliable ticketing service that will ensure they have the absolute best experience at their event, right from their first step towards the venue," Davey says.

Chris Auld, Intergen's Chief Technology Officer, says: "The Windows Azure platform is uniquely well-suited to a ticketing business. Before this, nobody had cracked the problem of the dramatic scale-up and scale-back needed to handle peak loads. Without the cloud-based, pay-as-you-go model, it's hard to do that. Now TicketDirect can achieve better elastic scale by turning capacity on and off as required, and only paying for what they use."

### THE GAIN

By making the move from a traditional computing model to a cloud-based model, TicketDirect can reduce costs and reallocate IT resources to focus on business problems, rather than system maintenance. There's also the advantage of familiar tools, flexible development and powerful databases.

"Ticketing is a uniquely hard problem because of the huge spikes in load. Because SQL Azure allows us to spin up SQL Server databases for short periods of time we can deploy a huge number of nodes for the short period of time it takes to sell an event out," says Beric Holt, Intergen's team lead on the project.

"In terms of cost savings, it's almost infinite," Davey says. "With the Windows Azure platform, all we do is spin up extra databases on demand and we're ready to start selling. We're able to easily handle ticketing for multiple large events on the same day."

Nowadays, TicketDirect can sell out a 200,000 seat event in minutes without having hardware laying idle for most of the year.

TicketDirect is the first Australasian ticketing company to base their solution strategy in the cloud. In recognition of their innovation, 2010 TicketDirect won the IDC Enterprise Innovation Award for their cloud-based ticketing solution. Thanks to it embracing cloud technologies, an overburdened, sluggish ticket sales process is now a thing of the past for TicketDirect – which can only be good for business.

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