Nominee: Six Degrees Group

Nomination title: Six Degrees Group delivers innovative solution to private sector

From DJ sets with Rob da Bank to the storming live performances of Foals and Busta Rhymes, Bestival, the four day summer extravaganza set on the Isle of Wight, attracts thousands of music-loving festival-goers each year. The event website (www.bestival.net) is the key to Bestival's success, serving not only as a reference point for attendees with its news and accommodation information, but also as a referral site for ticket purchasing. The Bestival website is the life and soul of the festival.

What was the driving force behind the project – what business or technology challenge needed to be addressed?

In the past ten years the number of Bestival attendees has seen an increase of 500%, taking the total number of attendees to over 50,000. This growth has placed a huge demand on the IT infrastructure that underpins the website. With such a large audience accessing the latest event information from mobile devices, keeping the website up and running is now evermore mission-critical to Bestival's success.

The Bestival team were under increasing pressure to keep the site running with maximum uptime to help ensure that all information needed by attendees, such as ticketing data, line-up acts, camping details and directions to stages, was always available. With the website receiving traffic 24/7 from the increasing number of festival-goers (expected to be 55,000 this year), and with vulnerabilities surrounding major announcements, Bestival needed a highly available, scalable solution that would support significant peaks in traffic with a resilient infrastructure. They were also looking for a supplier that could deliver flexibility on both a commercial and a technical level, based on trust and communication.

How did the solution address the challenges and were there any particularly innovative aspects that made it stand out?

Bestival chose Six Degrees Group (6DG) based on its ability to deliver a high quality, resilient, secure hosting infrastructure that could underpin their website environment throughout the lead up to, and duration of the festival.

The 6DG team is also known for:

•   Its experience

•   Its focus on understanding the exact painpoints of the infrastructure and then how to fix them

6DG deployed a highly available and scalable website hosting platform, including a fully managed backup and disaster recovery strategy across geographically diverse locations. Bestival's primary IT environment is based on a virtual cloud solution, hosted on 6DG's cloud platform, located within 6DG's privately owned datacentre in London. The solution is fully scalable, which allows Bestival to add additional capacity, on a temporary basis, when it anticipates an influx in traffic, for example when line-ups are announced and demand for the website increases.

The solution is backed up on a secondary cloud platform in 6DG's Studley datacentre. With fully managed backup and reserved compute power matching the primary environment, this hybrid cloud configuration allows for full disaster recovery.

What major challenges were faced during the project and how were they overcome?

Flexibility was the biggest challenge throughout the project. Bestival's infrastructure was not scaling with Bestival's growing needs and flexible capacity became a priority for the company.

6DG solved this issue by taking the time to focus on understanding the exact set up needed by Bestival. Bestival needed a future facing solution that could solve its scaling problems. With this in mind, 6DG looked at how Bestival was operating on its shared server, and took time to work out the appropriate ways of adding more servers and capacity. 6DG focused on load balancing and the firewalls, adding the right resources to support the growing database/applications.

What tangible benefits has the organisation seen as a result of the project's implementation?

6DG has provided Bestival with access to a flexible solution that meets its needs for scalability as well as back up and recovery. 6DG stresses the importance of data security, maintaining control of its datacentres from the entry gates through to the data racks, central to Bestival's requirements to protect its mission-critical infrastructure. Year on year, the tailored managed service delivered by 6DG gives Bestival access to a high quality infrastructure, that is cost effective. Bestival also has access to ongoing support that continue to sustain the future growth of the festival.

6DG provides an SLA for the Recovery Point Objective (RPO) and Recovery Time Objective (RTO) of 24 hours and 4 hours respectively. This is seen as integral for the business continuity of Bestival as the site is fundamental to its entire operation.

The impact: experts are now running the Bestival infrastructure – 6DG manage it, maintain it, take away the worry and allows the site to support peaks and troughs in demand.

Bruce Hay, Head of Digital, Bestival said: "With a huge array of cutting edge live acts and DJs, major headline acts such as OutKast, Foals, Chic ft. Nile Rodgers and Beck, Bestival's popularity and audience continues to grow apace each year. The website is integral to this success, promoting and informing festival-goers of what's happening and why they should join us in September. Through the website, our festival-goers have access to the latest information wherever they are and no matter how many others are online. We have confidence that when we're due to make a big announcement, thanks to the inbuilt resilience of the solution, as well as the support and communication channels we have with 6DG, that our website will be able to support the demand for information."

Hay concluded: "6DG has worked with us to provide a flexible hosting platform that met the brief. Our website is key to our success and 6DG takes this seriously, they understand that total control of our data and disaster recovery capabilities are integral to our IT department. Working with 6DG, we have found a solution that offers us the flexibility to scale up and down as we need to without compromising on data security or replication capabilities."

Why nominee should win

1. With the website receiving traffic 24/7 from the increasing number of festival-goers, Bestival needed a highly available, scalable solution to support peaks in traffic

2. Six Degrees Group deployed a highly available and scalable website hosting platform, including a fully managed backup and disaster recovery strategy across geographically diverse locations

3. Now Bestival benefits from a solution that minimises worry, allowing the site to support peaks and troughs in demands