Selligent builds marketing automation on a SaaS platform in a Private Cloud set up by Combell

An increasing number of customers of Selligent tools for marketing automation choose a SaaS solution (Software as a Service). Large multinationals entrust the hosting of their marketing database to one of Combell's Private Cloud platforms. "Security, availability and scalability are essential", says Selligent CTO Ben Vloemans.

Selligent's ISSUE

- Software-as-a-Service hosting
- Robust hardware environment with redundancy at all levels
- Minimal downtime for maintenance and only at night
- 25 billion e-mails sent a year

selligent
reconnect your brand

Selligent is a popular marketing automation tool used by large multinationals like Brussels Airlines, Mobistar, NH Hoteles, StepStone and Thomas Cook to support their business strategy. With increasing frequency, they choose a ready-to-use SaaS platform (Software-as-a-Service), which Selligent provides in close collaboration with Combell. The marketing data are stored there in a highly secure Private Cloud.

"By using our tool, brands are able to communicate better with people. They want to deliver their customers the right product or the right service at the right moment", says Selligent CTO Ben

Vloemans. "This ranges from simple communication through newsletters to highly advanced scenarios for sales, retargeting of people who haven't bought anything or churn prevention. Very large customer databases are often involved as well as cross-channel communication, from e-mail campaigns, call centres and print to door-to-door contacts."

Robust protection for marketing information

"Our online application is often an essential part of the communication between these companies and their millions of customers", says Ben

Combell's SOLUTION

- Marketing Automation, Cross Channel
- Virtualisation (VMWare)
- Private Cloud
- Load balancing
- Monitoring
- SAN storage
- Large range of IP addresses
- Managed services up to the virtualisation layer and the operating system
- Combell hardware with strict service guarantees and spare hardware parts on location

COMBELL'S ASSETS according to Selligent

- 24/7 monitoring and technical support
- Ultra high availability
- Efficient during traffic peaks
- Flexible allocation of virtual servers and storage
- ISO 27001 certificate
- Complementary technical knowledge
- Working together as one large team

We are very satisfied. We can deliver very high availability to our customers.

COMBELL GROUP NV - www.combell.com
For further information on this article: **info@combell.com**, or call **0800-8-567890**

Combell
Your host on the internet

From day one, Combell assisted us in setting up the architecture, the design, the roll-out and the support.

Vloemans. "In the SaaS package, Selligent handles everything for them: servers and networks – with the help of Combell – and everything beyond that, like e.g. software installation, maintenance and security."

"In practice, Combell is in charge of applying the security rules to our systems and networks. They manage the firewalls, but we determine the rules. That choice is related to what is called the 'segregation of duties'. There's a double check on it. Combell conducts checks, but so do we. All roles are defined in a confidential document: which interventions Combell is allowed to perform for us and which clearance level is required to do so. This way, it is impossible for a firewall to be opened for no reason, or for a system to unexpectedly become vulnerable."

Business-critical Internet services with uptime guarantee

The responsibility to manage marketing campaigns for prominent and often multinational organisations also weighs heavily at the level of availability. Selligent is of capital importance to them, says Ben Vloemans: "We solve business-critical problems for our customers. For a number of parties that avail themselves of our services, our service entails much more than sending out a newsletter. We are integrated in the companies' core processes. For other customers, the e-commerce websites would simply be offline if we were to disappear. We are a vital link in the whole system. We cannot afford a second of downtime."

An architecture design that Selligent developed in collaboration with Combell guarantees continuity of services, even in case of problems. "Redundancy is essential. To make sure we are always available and online, we incorporate redundancy into many levels and layers. What if something goes wrong? Then there's always a B node or a second server to pick up the tasks."

"During the course of this project, Combell has done much of the thinking along with us. We had our own expertise with setting up a Private Cloud. From day one, Combell assisted us in setting up the architecture, the design, the roll-out and

now the support. We are very satisfied with the results: we can deliver very high availability to our customers. In fact, we never get any complaints in that department."

"Initially, we found it very important to have all the skills in house. We started off with a Private Cloud as part of a fully self-managed solution. Combell took care of the hardware, assisted us and actively thought along with us, but in the end it was almost co-location. In 2012, we switched to a model in which Combell provides a fully managed service. They offer us strict SLA guarantees that we can subsequently offer to our customers. Combell takes responsibility for the uptime of the systems, up to just beneath the application layer."

25.000.000.000 e-mails a year

Another important thing to consider when designing the architecture is the performance of the platform. "It's not because our application is available that it is efficient", explains Ben Vloemans. "Capacity planning is therefore something we do together with Combell. Today, we reinforce our infrastructure in view of traffic peaks we will only be expecting next year. This way, we have enough buffering capacity at our disposal."

"We are in a business that has to cope with extremely heavy traffic peaks. If somebody sends out a mailing, this means that, half an hour later, several millions of computers will connect to our systems. And we have to be able to cope with such traffic peaks. In that perspective, capacity planning is crucial. On a yearly basis, for all our customers together, we send out about 25 billion e-mails. If you consider that we make each one of those e-mails traceable through a unique code and delivery report, we are talking enormous amounts of information – several Terabytes' worth of it. On the whole, we are at the verge of what is called 'Big Data'. The problems we have to solve are comparable in any case."

"Sending e-mails is actually a discipline in itself. It seems a simple enough task, until you suddenly have to send out 1 or even 10 million messages. More complex matters then come up. It's a challenge to ensure that advanced anti-spam systems used by large ISPs understand that we

Ben Vloemans: "We must carry out all maintenance tasks at night. This puts a heavy workload on our team, but even more so on Combell's teams. They simply provide that service to perfection."

are not sending spam but legitimate e-mails. Our central e-mail delivery platform has a large amount of IP addresses at its disposal. We have an almost unlimited sending capacity. That way, we can send large volumes of e-mail and guarantee that they reach their destination, or at least detect when and where something is going wrong."

"Working together as one big team"

Selligent ended up working with Combell after taking over Easyhost in 2008. "The demand for SaaS solutions was very low at that time: 90% of our installations were located in house. SaaS was mostly an option for small customers who didn't want to make huge investments right away", Ben Vloemans remembers. "To us, the acquisition by Combell happened at exactly the right time, because we had reached our limits with Easyhost. We immediately noticed the difference. Suddenly, we were dealing with people who are very aware of what IT security is or how they have to incorporate redundancy. In the meantime, Combell's own expertise has markedly grown as well. Together, we followed the path to even greater maturity."

"Currently, our technical staff are working together with Combell, with complementary skills. Combell has extensive experience in networking, servers, SAN and NAS, from the physical layer to the operating system. And we have the required expertise, ranging from the application level to the business solution, in house. That way, we complete each other perfectly."

"At the operational level, I honestly rarely have the feeling that we are dealing with two distinct entities at all. I find that to be a very positive signal. When you see people working together at an operational level, they are almost colleagues, each with their own added value. That is certainly one of the reasons why I would choose Combell again. Your problem is their problem."

"For reasons of availability, we never carry out maintenance tasks during the daytime. When downtime is involved, it's almost always a matter of infrastructure. So, we must carry out all maintenance tasks at night. The same goes for the planned monthly maintenance for system or security

updates. This puts a heavy workload on our team, but even more so on Combell's teams. They simply provide that service to perfection."

Proactive monitoring and ISO certification

High availability guarantees require sustained monitoring. Therefore, Selligent trusts three monitoring systems, Ben Vloemans explains. "Combell monitors all assets on which they deliver an SLA—which, in the present constellation, is everything. Furthermore, we have our own monitoring system for our support team, which provides 24/7 support to our customers. They check if the experience corresponds to what the customer is paying for. They detect things that aren't entirely visible from the bottom. If a customer makes a mistake and accidentally changes a setting, nothing is the matter at a technical level. But there is a problem with user experience."

"Thirdly, we use external monitoring to be able to deliver independent SLA values. When we guarantee high availability to our customers, we can hardly use Combell's numbers for that, because there's a risk of conflict of interests. For the same reason, we cannot use our own numbers. Therefore, we need an external party to monitor the entire infrastructure and provide independent statistics."

"Recently, we also obtained an ISO 27001 certificate. In our case, we have been certified for all controls, for the physical access control as well as for everything ranging from badges, security cameras, etc. up to segregation in our data centre – of our customers as well as our databases. It's in part thanks to Combell that we were able to obtain the ISO 27001 label, in the sense that Combell also had to be ISO certified in their quality of main subcontractor. We were able to harmonize our certificates and Combell's, which allowed us to incorporate a referral to Combell and their partners in our own ISO certificate for verifications for which we cannot be responsible ourselves. For certain things, we collaborate with several parties, but the entire chain is closed nevertheless."

Combell takes responsibility for the uptime of the systems, up to just beneath the application layer.

Combell has extensive experience in networking, servers, SAN and NAS, up to the operating system. And we have the required expertise, for both the application and the business solution, in house. That way, we complete each other perfectly."

More info about this solution?
Contact one of our account managers on
0800-8-567890

Combell
Your host on the internet