

Playing smarter with stronger hardware and a global network



Highlights

■ Challenge

Keeping up with skyrocketing demand at home and in disparate geographical markets

■ Solution

IBM server hardware; Akamai Electronic Software Delivery solution and globally distributed platform

■ Key benefits

Improved speed and quality of download rates and increased availability of games to more customers in more markets

The popularity challenge

When unexpected success required a change in battle plan, Kuma Games looked to IBM® and IBM Business Partner Akamai for a new, winning strategy.

Since 2003, Kuma has developed and published 3D episodic games, with a growing portfolio of single-player missions and massive multiplayer games such as Kuma\War, DinoHunters and Dogfights, developed in conjunction with The History Channel.

Players download new, graphics-rich episodes each week for free, with more than 100 ad-supported titles delivered to date. The company originally targeted the U.S. market and located its servers domestically to best accommodate user downloads.

Where in the world is Kuma Games?

Then a surprising thing happened. Play took off in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and other regions around the world that Kuma hadn't predicted.

Kuma encouraged this trend by creating more global content, including titles that were aimed at its newest players. The upside was an expanding audience with more people for its U.S. fans to play with, but the larger, more distributed customer base meant that downloads from its U.S. servers were taking longer. Rising costs and server space needs were starting to outpace advertising income.

Kuma had to expand to satisfy this booming new audience. It needed a global solution—new themes and content for its various markets and an infrastructure that could handle international delivery, starting with multiplayer servers and increased connectivity. But it had to keep investments in line, too.

That's when Kuma turned to IBM for hardware that could handle the job. And IBM introduced Kuma to Akamai and its content-delivery network to increase availability.

Bull's-eye solution

IBM BladeCenter® servers form the basis of this new infrastructure, which has to be able to scale to meet increasing demand and support unpredictable traffic spikes while improving download completion rates. The servers' flexibility enables Kuma to discard its old ongame- per-box setup by running multiple different games on a single server, so if a game peaks at a particular time of day, it could be



The new technology is already translating to dollars and cents: We've seen download times slashed, and as a result conversion rates have improved by 40% with user time rising.

— Keith Halper, CEO, Kuma Games

queued up and ready to deliver when the rush begins.

The other crucial element was Kuma's move to the Akamai Electronic Software Delivery solution and globally distributed platform. This content delivery network has 10,000 servers that can handle a "big pop" as needed anywhere in the world, so downloads can originate closer to the player and happen faster.

"Suddenly I'm gaining scale that I, as a small business, could never afford on my own," says Keith Halper, CEO of Kuma Games. "We know that when we get fans we'll keep them because our games are great, but getting them to our first game is critical."

The result? Kuma can provide fast, engaging and high-quality online gaming experiences to its customers—and has a high-powered set of partners who can help it continue to expand into the global games marketplace.

Playing smarter

Since putting the IBM and Akamai solution to work, download times have decreased significantly, with a 38% increase in new players in the United States and a 30% increase worldwide. Additionally, Kuma is exploring other technologies that can be used in region-specific cases, such as peerto-peer downloads. And the ads that support its free episodes download

and play smoothly all the way through. Just like its games.

"Our games can be beautiful and really 'fat,' so they can take time to download," Halper explains. "So the faster the download, the more content we can add. We are upgrading 120 games to include the richer textures and greater detail that customers expect. We would not have been able to upgrade like that without this solution."

Why IBM?

IBM and IBM Business Partners offer a wide variety of best-in-class hardware, hosting and technology solutions to address business needs. For smaller companies such as Kuma Games, as well as other Software-as-a-Service entities—even those outside the game industry—the value of established, experienced partners is considerable. IBM can draw on an extended network of more than 100,000 business partners worldwide, and a growing network of industry specialists in Games and Interactive Entertainment, to find the right solutions for clients small and large. By starting with IBM, Kuma can tap into an existing global infrastructure, giving it a major advantage in its play-to-win strategy.

For more information

Contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner. Visit us at: ibm.com/solutions/games

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