



Codemasters Ensures that Dragon Empires' Players Get Optimal Network Performance



Codemasters® is a leading developer and global publisher of computer and video games including its groundbreaking epic fantasy, Dragon Empires™. Dragon Empires, a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG), combines a state-of-the-art graphics engine with detailed gameplay

to provide an involving and extremely interactive game experience. Players can choose to trade goods, manufacture items, fight monsters, each other or other clans.

Dragon Empires, Codemasters' latest MMORPG game, allows players to enter a virtual world, called Fortitude, using their own computer as a terminal. In Fortitude, players can see all the other players who are logged on as well as the monsters who inhabit the world. All game information, such as status information about characters, is stored on the central server, thereby ensuring that each character has a persistent presence in the virtual world.

Dragon Empires users access the game from all over the world, via the internet, using a wide range of broadband and narrowband connections. So Codemasters' development studio selected Shunra VE Desktop to test the performance of Dragon Empires and X-box games under realistic and unrealistic network.

"It was instantly clear that Shunra had the ideal solution for our developers. The Shunra PerformanceSuite allows them to create a piece of code and test it there and then, and see what response time they get. We now know what conditions we can cope with and what we cannot and, as a result, we feel confident that we are building the right products," commented Alan Ward, Head of IT at Codemasters. "The ShunraPerformanceSuite has opened up a whole new world for us, and it's become an integral part of the way we work and enhanced our development process. It was a very worthwhile purchase. We certainly can't do without it."

"Before using PerformanceSuite, we tested our code over the LAN," added Codemasters' Lead Server Programmer, Jonathan Attfield. "We knew that this

Challenge

The popularity of interactive gaming means gaming developers must be able to design systems that support worldwide user access, across a wide range of Internet connections. Knowing that testing over the LAN would not be adequate, and realizing that even troubleshooting efforts required real-world network conditions, Codemasters turned to Shunra.

Solution

Shunra's PerformanceSuite is used throughout the application lifecycle, helping developers to quickly test a piece of code and determine response times under real-world network conditions. Codemasters is now able to emulate the different network characteristics experienced by remote users over different types of connections, and found that PerformanceSuite paid for itself the first time it was used to help debug a problem, saving the company considerable time and resources.

wasn't giving us a realistic picture of performance over the internet, and we thought we'd be holding our breath and going out into the wild when we went to beta. Shunra's solution came at exactly the right time. It mitigates our risk and gives us a level of confidence that we wouldn't otherwise have. It allows us to control our own destiny."

Codemasters uses Shunra during the early testing of its Dragon Empires code. It enables the development studio to accurately emulate Internet conditions, such as connectivity, packet loss and latency, which are found in real-life. "We use Shunra to emulate a range of different modem settings, enabling us to thoroughly test throughput and the real-life game experience for the different types of internet connections our end-users will be using to log onto the game.

Through this testing, we are able to trap and find many more bugs and problems much earlier in the development cycle, well before the game goes out to the public for beta testing," explained Attfield.

"It helps us work out at which points play becomes impractical. Thanks to Shunra, we can now concentrate the beta testing on game and play balance issues – that all the characters interact well and that everyone gets a fair game – rather than spending the first half of beta time debugging network code," added Attfield.

When testing the movement transmission system using Shunra, Codemasters' developers found that it worked fine under all network conditions except for out-of-order packets. "With Shunra's PerformanceSuite, we immediately realized that the out-of-order packets were the source of the problem. There could have been a multitude of possible reasons for the bug, and without having being able to control the different parameters, the debugging time would have increased dramatically. Our purchase paid for itself in this single instance alone," concluded Attfield.

"Shunra's products have given us a high degree of flexibility in our testing, and have definitely helped us to be more productive, as well as reduce the life-cycle and cost of our products," concluded Alan Ward.

"Shunra PerformanceSuite's ability to emulate and control, to a very high degree, the network parameters and conditions means that we can make sure the game performs to expectations under all conditions

Alan Ward.
Head of IT, Codemasters

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