

Opsera gets Virgin Money running

Virgin Money has recently launched a new, innovative, not-for-profit business called Virgin Money Giving (VMG). VMG is a new charity fundraising business to support Virgin Money's sponsorship of the Virgin London Marathon as well as a huge range of other fundraising events across the UK. The aim of VMG is to make sure that more money raised reaches the great causes for which it was intended.

As the VMG business is not-for-profit, it only needs to charge a minimum fee to cover its running costs. This means that for every £100m of money raised over £5m more will go to good causes when compared with existing fundraising sites.

From inception, Opsera worked with Virgin Money Giving (VMG) to define, design and deliver the new fundraising website. Opsera were selected to design and build a secure, scalable web application based on open source components and to be delivered in aggressive timescales. We worked with our offshore partner, Arrk, and managed a joint team split across three locations giving VMG the cost advantages of an offshore model, with the responsiveness of an experienced UK based team handling architecture, design and programme management.

The Challenge

Our challenge was to design and build a new web application architecture from scratch, which would provide VMG with an effective platform to drive their new business. The system would be managing very large volumes of financial transactions and would be subject to credit card PCI compliance. The system therefore had to be secure, scale up to many thousands of simultaneous users, and use an enterprise-class, loosely-coupled service-oriented architecture (SOA). The project had to be delivered very rapidly but for a minimum cost to ensure that as much of the donations went to charity as possible.

Our Approach

We established a team of UK-based senior technical architects and developers with relevant web skills, led by a senior Opsera programme manager. Simultaneously we worked with our offshore partner to set-up a team of technical team leaders, developers, testers, support staff and management in India, and began the project with an initiation phase where we sent some UK staff to India, and some Indian based staff to the UK in order to establish communication lines and ensure that the distributed team model delivered an effective engagement.

Our team worked in collaboration with VMG personnel to define the functionality required, design an architecture that could be deployed within the budget and time constraints, and then develop the application. We used continuous integration to ensure that the distributed team was able to efficiently collaborate on the same code base.



Our Client

[Visit Website](#)

Virgin Money Giving is a not-for-profit fundraising website, dedicated to helping charities and fundraisers raise more money for good causes.

Opsera have delivered on the promise of an enterprise scale, open source based solution. Working closely with my internal team, they have delivered an exciting interactive platform for us to base our new business around, and have done so in tight timescales and without the need for any proprietary software licences and their associated costs. They have been great people to work with – experienced and professional, but with a passion and a can-do attitude. They, like us, believe in the potential of our new venture to change the nature of charitable giving and have invested a great deal of their time pro bono to ensure we launched with a game changing system
*Kevin Revell, Group CTO
Virgin Money*



Solution

Opsera's consultants designed an architecture based around a stack of open-source components, whilst working with the VMG technical team to ensure that it met their scalability, performance, security and functional requirements. We built proof-of-concepts for key components and integration points and then provided detailed design work to the offshore team. Opsera and Arrk's team then developed the system in a phased approach with multiple deliveries to the VMG team for testing. The system integrated with a number of 3rd party and in-house systems (e.g. Oracle Financials, Active Directory) and a variety of web-services.

In partnership with VMG we ran a very comprehensive testing phase that covered functional, non-functional, security, performance, PCI compliance and financial control capabilities to ensure the entire system met stringent quality standards.

Technologies used: Apache web server, JBoss application server 4.3, RedHat Enterprise Linux, MySQL database, Java 5, Spring Framework (container, JSR-250 support, AOP, transactions, JMX, JMS support, JPA support, mail support, dynamic language beans), JPA/Hibernate, Spring Security, Freemarker templates, Struts 2, JSP, Spring Batch, Spring Integration, Spring LDAP, Spring Modules Caching, Spring Modules Validation, Metro/JAX-WS for Web services, Dozer mapper, JMS (asynchronous messaging), Groovy scripts, Solr search service / Lucene, Quartz scheduler, JA-SIG CAS single sign-on, Jasper Reports.
Assets integrated into project: VMWare, Tridion, Active Directory, Oracle Financials, F5 load balancers, Eclipse, Subversion, Ant, Maven, JUnit, Mockito, Cobertura, Checkstyle, Findbugs, Hudson (CI server), SOAP UI.

Results

Virgin Money Giving were able to launch their new business with a system that took over 20 man-years of development effort in only 9 months with initial costs that are dramatically less when compared to a system developed onshore. The open source architecture gives them great flexibility to enhance the platform in the future and their lower on-going operational costs ensure a much better value proposition for their charity customers so that more money goes to the many good causes supported.

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