

Flooded with Aid: Smart Service Queensland stays online during disaster, despite traffic deluge



Customer:

Smart Service Queensland

Key Facts:

- Three quarters of QLD declared a disaster zone
- 70 Million hits in the space of 14 days
- 774,763 Unique visitors

Challenge:

- An unpredicted surge of traffic to the Queensland Premier's appeal website

Solution:

- An increase in hosting infrastructure to the site as part of [Melbourne IT's flexible tailored hosting service](#)
- 10 Temporary servers

Results:

- The site handled a traffic increase of 40 fold without any outages or disruption to user experience

On Tuesday, 11 January, 2011 Queensland Premier Anna Bligh declared three quarters of Queensland a disaster zone as the state battled with one of the biggest flooding events in its history. Brisbane was at risk of major flooding and, at the time, was predicted to experience more damage than the 1974 floods – an incident which saw the Brisbane River reach a peak of 5.5 metres.

Over the next 24 hours, additional warnings were issued, with thousands of people evacuated from towns and cities in South Queensland and in the course of three days the Brisbane River broke its banks and inundated low lying areas. More than 200,000 people were affected and the floods caused an estimated \$5 Billion (AUD) worth of damage.

As news of the devastation spread, people from around the world wanting to donate money to help the affected surged to the Premier's flood relief appeal website, which was launched on 29 December. The site is maintained by Smart Service Queensland (Smart Service) – Queensland Government's information delivery provider.

In the space of two days Smart Service recorded 598,216 people visiting the site. However, this rapid increase in traffic had in fact begun long before the floods hit Brisbane.

In early January there was an increase of visitors to the site as conditions began to worsen throughout Queensland and Smart Service knew it would only be a matter of time before the traffic became heavier.

A plan to survive the surge

With the predicted increase of traffic, plus the approaching Channel Nine flood appeal telethon on 9 January, the site was going to experience a heavier load than it was designed to handle.

As the team at Smart Service knew that the usual servers would not survive a sustained spike in traffic, they worked with Melbourne IT Enterprise Services (ES), who host the site from their Brisbane data centre, to increase the level of hosting infrastructure to the site.

In less than 48 hours Melbourne IT ES's Brisbane-based team had provided a complimentary increase in the front end server capacity by five fold.

Smart Service were impressed with the quick response from Melbourne IT ES, who had their technical team ready, and, with the account managers, determined the best design within one conference call.

Keeping afloat

After the initial conference call, Melbourne IT ES immediately engaged GTS Interactive, a specialist creator and management provider of interactive digital solutions, to get 10 temporary servers – eight more than usual, up and running.

GTS Interactive organised for the increased capacity to be put in place for the next 30 days and completed the change free of charge. They moved resources around to ensure everything on the site was successfully replicated across all servers.

As a result, the site remained up and running at all times, ensuring access for both donors and those affected.

A success story

By 14 January, the site's traffic was unexpectedly increased by 40 fold, with 774,763 of these being unique visitors.

Smart Service had more than 70 million hits in the space of 14 days.

Without scaling the hosting and using virtualisation storage to meet this demand, the site would not have held this load.

Smart Service is extremely happy with the service provided by Melbourne IT ES's Brisbane team.