



Case Study in Performance

Optimizing Web Performance for the Atex/Polopoly platform

By utilizing Apica's partnership with Atex and the company's expertise on the Polopoly platform Apica has assisted Gulf News in implementing Web Performance enhancements.

The web site gulfnews.com was load tested and many Web Performance bottlenecks were identified and mostly eliminated. As a result overall response times and maximum load capacity was significantly improved.

gulfnews.com

About Gulf News

Gulf News is based in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and is the largest English language newspaper in the region with a BPA audited daily circulation of 123,444 copies. Gulfnews.com is the leading local news website in the UAE attracting approximately 1.5 Million unique users each month.

Gulf News uses the Atex/Polopoly Content Management System as the core of its web platform and publishing system.

Gulf News perfectly illustrates the challenges of a content rich media site in the year 2010. The incredible amount of information available on Web 2.0 sources is the editor's dream. BUT, the publishing of all that information on the web site can easily become the IT manager's nightmare.

Gulf News has a geographically distributed audience with readers not only across all the countries in the Gulf region, but also a sizable global readership. The differences in bandwidth, devices and local Internet distribution make it even more important to be in control of Web Performance. Faced with these challenges Gulf News chose to turn to Web Performance company Apica, for a complete review, test and performance improvement project.

Apica's previous experience with the Polopoly platform was a key criterion for being awarded this work. Each Content Management System has its own particularities in settings and configuration options. In order to get the best possible Web Performance out of the CMS and the way it operates with the rest of the web platform, CMS-specific expertise is invaluable. "Apica's experienced test staff" has years of knowledge in tuning Polopoly installations and a head start in finding and eliminating performance problems that are Polopoly specific if they are present.

GULF NEWS PROJECT GOALS

- Ensure system performance would not impact on visitors on go live.
- To get a clear measurement of the site's Web Performance and response times on search/traversing and page rendering.
- To get at clear measurement of the maximum number of concurrent users that the system can serve with sustained performance/response times.
- To verify the stability of applications close to peak load.
- To expose potential bugs that do not surface in cursory testing, such as memory management bugs, memory leaks, buffer overflows, etc
- To identify components that are Web Performance bottlenecks and cause potential delay (Such as JavaScripts, images etc.)
- To produce recommendations on how Web Performance can be improved.

THE RESULTS

The project was carried out in three steps:

Firstly, baseline Web Performance was established.

Secondly, tuning and improvement efforts were carried out.

Finally, peak load capacity and response times were determined and recorded. These Web Performance

limits and targets will now serve as guidelines and targets for Gulf News IT operations.

In particular, various cache (HTTP-acceleration) methods and settings were tested, and overall bandwidth need was revised.



“As our web site gulfnews.com becomes an increasingly important part of our business, ensuring world class Web Performance becomes a must. Working with Apica has proven to be an excellent choice for us. They have specific expert knowledge of our platform, they have completeness in the service offering which minimises potential undetected problem areas, and finally being a fast and agile company they can give us the attention we need when we need it. What really counts in the end is the question whether we have better Web Performance now than before the project, and I can safely say – Yes we do.”

- Fadi Issa, Service delivery manager for corporate digital media.