Flexwebhosting spins up services in record time with Canonical

Highlights

- Flexwebhosting utilises Canonical's experience and expertise to deliver new business model

- BootStack delivers managed cloud infrastructure in days

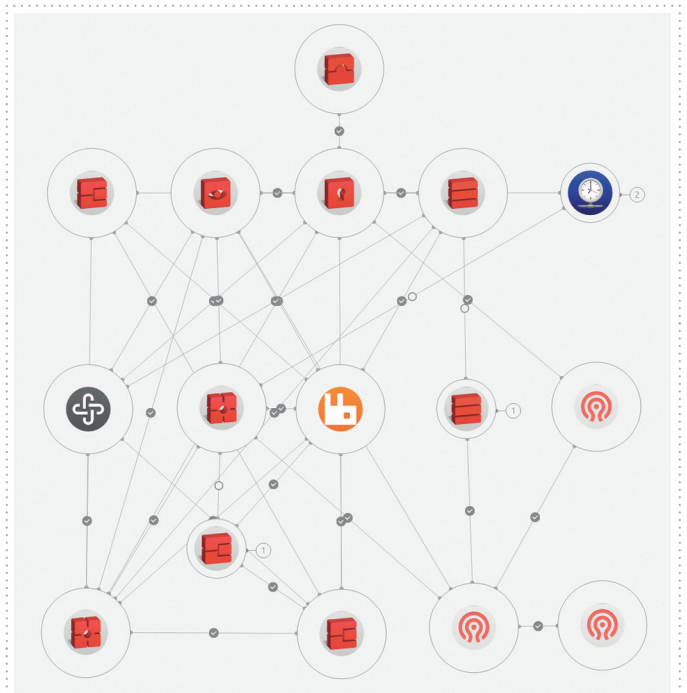- Juju enables service spin up in minutes

Company background

In 2002 Flexwebhosting became the first organisation to offer an advanced web hosting service for individuals and businesses in the Netherlands. Now one of the largest web hosting providers with more than 60,000 customers, it has registered over 150,000 domain names and houses over 6,500 web servers in different data centers in Amsterdam.

The challenge

The Netherlands has the highest density of hosting companies in the world with between 300-350 individual providers. Market competition is fierce and customers expect high levels of service. The economics of running a hosting service in today's market are tight and to be successful, businesses need to outperform their competitors by providing compelling service offerings to its customers.

In 2015 Flexwebhosting decided to embark on a new service model for its business. The current infrastructure meant that any incoming customer request for a new service or change in service model needed to be assigned to an engineer, created on an individual basis and then implemented, this could take hours in delivery. 90% of customer requests are for web services and Flexwebhosting received a lot of requests per day, creating extremely labour and time intensive workloads which was impacting on its service capability and return on capital expenditure.

Flexwebhosting needed to reallocate existing resource and find a way to deliver services to its customers in a faster time to market maintaing its competitive edge and existing service with minimum disruption.

Provisioning services takes just a few minutes with Canonical's Juju

It also wanted to see if it could re-train staff on the new infrastructure and management tools whilst at the same time have trusted experts who could manage the service whilst internal staff upskilled. After reviewing market options, they knew the route they wanted to take was OpenStack.

OpenStack is the world's leading open cloud platform, and provides all the core services needed to build and deploy an operational, open-source cloud, from compute (virtualisation and bare metal), storage (block and object) and networking.

The solution

Fairbanks NL is one of the most experienced open source and OpenStack cloud consultancies in the Netherlands and Flexwebhosting began working with them to assess the right OpenStack route to take. They wanted to find a partner that could manage the infrastructure and simplify operations so Flexwebhosting could concentrate on getting new services to market quicker.

"We have evaluated every OpenStack distribution there is on the market: SUSE, HP, Red Hat etc. But when we looked at Canonical's Ubuntu it fit every single criteria we needed; open source, support for hardware, seamless integration and interoperability with other technologies and the only company that had an SLA for building and supplying cloud development."

Eric Kessels, CTO, Fairbanks NL

Canonical's Ubuntu is the most popular operating system for OpenStack deployments and the most widely used developer platform for the open cloud. Ubuntu and OpenStack release cycles are synchronised, ensuring all the latest OpenStack cloud features are available for users as soon as possible after they are released.

It was critical to Flexwebhosting that any future infrastructure would enable its engineering staff to upskill on OpenStack, which was a fairly new approach to cloud deployment, but also manage it in a controlled way. Canonical's managed private cloud offering BootStack was the perfect solution.

BootStack is a fully managed service for OpenStack clouds, in which Canonical experts will operate your cloud for a fixed price. Traditionally, BootStack provides an OpenStack private cloud along with Canonical's expert engineering team who will design, deploy, and operate the cloud. However Flexwebhosting requested that in time, the management and day to day running of the cloud environment be transferred to them after six months it was handed over to Flexwebhosting to manage.

"BootStack gave us the flexibility to have a fully baked OpenStack cloud environment in a matter of days but none of the headaches of building and management from scratch"

Ron Bouten, CEO, Flexwebhosting

The benefits

BootStack is a fully flexible, full service model so once staff were experienced on the cloud environment, they were able to run it themselves making significant reductions in cost and additional in house resource skill set built up.

"We get a lot of added benefits from having chosen Canonical and its BootStack offering," said Ron Bouten, CEO, Flexwebhosting. "Firstly the software release model, we are always on the most up to date software image and get all security patches as they are released so everything is up to date and on time, same software, same support model."

Juju is a state of the art, open source service modelling tool which allows you to model, configure, manage, maintain, deploy and scale cloud services quickly and efficiently. Using Juju to deploy OpenStack means you can quickly and easily provide additional services. Customers can actually provision web services themselves without the need to speak to someone at Flexwebhosting and ask for a new service. This has reduced Flexwebhosting's time to new service from days to minutes.

"Time to service is essential when you are a hosting company as it is extremely costly and resource intensive to manually create new services, per customer request. When we first saw Canonical's approach to service automation with Juju we couldn't believe it could be that straight-forward. It took less than five minutes to create a new service for a customer and in this business that is incredible"

Ron Bouten, CEO, Flexwebhosting

BootStack with optional transfer and Juju are essential tools to building successful stories with service providers. Please get in touch and join our service provider focused programme to build successful stories like Flexwebhosting and Fairbanks by visiting "Become a Partner" at partners.ubuntu.com/contact-us

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