

In a Class by Itself

Cardean Learning Group and OpenDemand

“A year ago, we were doing minimal load testing and a good deal of manual regression testing, but as our needs and our systems have grown more complex, we needed something more sophisticated. The OpenLoad tool has been instrumental in testing the functionality and scalability of our systems and the integration of our systems that run on different operating platforms.”

-Ron Calderone, VP of Information Technology, Cardean Learning Group



Cardean University

CHALLENGE

The University began to experience spectacular growth and a primary point of concern was the load that a five-fold increase in online traffic could place on the system. It was critical that the educational experience did not degrade as more students were added to the system.

SOLUTION

The University implemented Open Load for pre-deployment load testing. OpenLoad is used for load performance and scalability testing, and works by emulating thousands of users and stressing the entire infrastructure from a single point of control.

BUSINESS VALUE

By thoroughly testing all applications prior to release, the University was able to make improvements to ensure the system would operate as planned. With OpenLoad the benefits were immediate and substantial.

In a class by itself: Cardean Learning Group uses OpenLoad to keep its online courses humming. When your entire business is conducted online, and you're projecting your customer base to quadruple in 12 months, you'd do well to have a solid load testing tool within your IT infrastructure. Cardean Learning Group discovered that need — and soon after, discovered OpenLoad™ by OpenDemand Systems, Inc.

THE SITUATION

Cardean Learning Group (CLG), a Connecticut-based company, operates two online universities, offering both undergraduate and graduate courses. The company is experiencing spectacular growth. The schools' student population numbered 2,000 at the end of 2005, has expanded to 5,000 today, and is expected to balloon to 10,000 by year-end 2006.

CLG's VP of Information Technology, Ron Calderone, recognized how quickly that kind of growth could tax the school's technology infrastructure. And a primary point of concern was the load that a five-fold increase in online traffic could place on the system. It was critical that the educational experience did not degrade as more students were added to the system.

With more and more students conducting online activities like enrolling, applying for financial aid, taking exams, checking grades, submitting homework assignments, accessing teacher comments, and so on, the system needed to have proven reliability and scalability. CLG could not afford to experience an outage or a poorly performing system.

Compounding the issue of pure numbers, CLG was continually enhancing its learning platform, adding courses and offering additional self-service applications to its growing student population. The integration of the learning platform with a student information system and other services added to the complexity of the IT environment. New releases of the systems were being rolled out on a quarterly basis, and fastidious load testing was required to ensure its integrity. Clearly, CLG's IT testing capabilities needed an upgrade.



In a Class by Itself

Cardean Learning Group and OpenDemand

“A year ago, we were doing minimal load testing and a good deal of manual regression testing,” says Calderone. “But as our needs and our systems have grown more complex, we needed something more sophisticated.”

One option was to upgrade the school’s legacy testing tools. But the amount of scripting, coding and debugging required would have quickly overwhelmed the small IT team.

So Calderone determined that it would be more cost-effective and time-efficient to begin an external search for an automated load testing tool, conducting a full and independent evaluation of all tools on the market. “We looked at a lot of vendors,” Calderone recalls. “We interviewed them, we interviewed their customers.”

THE CHALLENGE

What the school’s IT team found was initially discouraging, for two reasons. Automated load testing solutions tended to be expensive and complex to use. From his interviews with existing customers, Calderone learned that these tools were not exactly plug-and-play; they required a good deal of incremental consulting support and services (and costs) from the vendor.

“None of the customers we interviewed could operate the solution without additional services,” Calderone says. “They were clearly very frustrated, because they became dependent on the vendor. They didn’t like being put in that position, especially since the product was so expensive in the first place.”

It was then that Calderone and his team discovered the OpenLoad solution from OpenDemand Systems of Newark, New Jersey. The company’s value proposition was intriguing: With solutions designed to address a specific need in the market for simple, powerful and affordable testing tools, OpenDemand provides the first viable alternative

to high-end commercial load testing tools that are overly priced and complex, and low-end performance testing tools that are largely unsupported and lack the robust feature set required to adequately test today’s enterprise-level Web applications.

That was enough to warrant a phone call.

THE SOLUTION

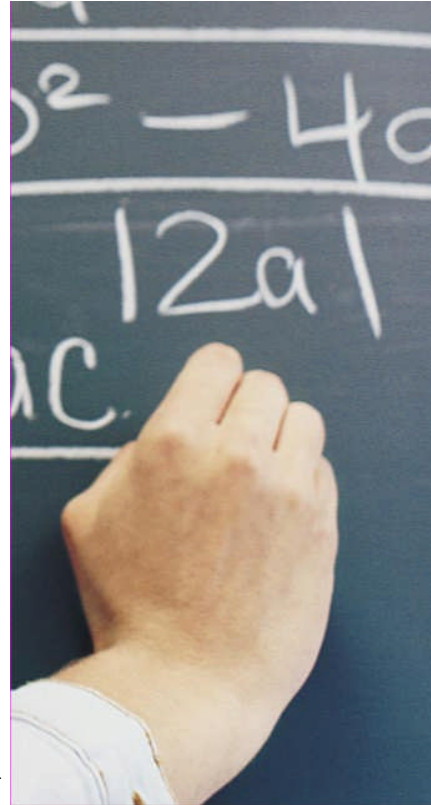
“Why are you the best?”

Donald Doane, CEO of OpenDemand Systems, remembers that question from the CLG IT team. “It was exactly the question we wanted to hear, because it allowed us to prove out the value of our OpenLoad tool — that is, its functionality, its simplicity and its low cost.”

OpenLoad is the industry’s only truly easy to use and affordable, browser-based, enterprise web site load testing and performance monitoring software. With OpenLoad, bottlenecks can be identified and the user experience optimized within minutes.

OpenDemand conducted an online demonstration of the tool for CLG’s Quality Assurance team, and they were impressed. But the true test was yet to come: a bake-off. CLG gave each competing vendor a common set of applications and processes, to see who would take the shortest time, with the fewest resources, to solve a load problem.

Doane had an ace up his sleeve: He teamed up with a software partner, Seapine™ Software, Inc., to present Cardean with a best-of-breed solution. While OpenDemand’s OpenLoad solution would conduct load testing, Seapine’s complementary QA Wizard solution would perform functional testing — that is, automating the process of determining that an application would work the way it should.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Using OpenLoad, the University was able to uncover bottle-necks and eliminate problems before going to production, which ensured a smooth roll out of all their Web based systems.
- The University continues to test with OpenLoad as they roll out new releases, code changes and upgrades to its applications to prevent unforeseen outages and poor performance.
- OpenLoad was the ideal solution to handle the University’s infrastructure testing, due to its ease of use and ability to emulate the University’s cyclical business nature and peak processing periods.

BENEFITS

- By implementing OpenLoad, the University was able to ensure their systems were stable and scalable enough to support a growing student base with the performance they have come to expect.
- OpenLoad’s superior ease of use and robust feature set minimized the amount of time and resources required to solve the University’s application load and functional issues.
- The ability to load test applications with a simulated background production load has allowed the University to develop efficient, scalable, custom Web applications.

In a Class by Itself

Cardean Learning Group and OpenDemand

When the test results came in, OpenDemand took the least amount of time and resources to solve the application load and functional issues. In June 2005, the CLG team unanimously selected OpenDemand as the school's best-of-breed vendor solution for load and functional testing of its online applications.

Another key component to CLG's choice had little to do with the OpenLoad product itself. "It was clear in our discussions that the OpenDemand team wanted to understand our needs," says Angela Morris, CLG's IT Quality Assurance Manager. "They started out by really listening to us, our issues and our needs. That impressed me."

Calderone agrees. "Don's team was right there for us from the start, with onsite training, and they continue to be a reliable partner for us."

THE RESULTS

With OpenLoad software installed on an IBM® platform that runs both Windows™ and Linux applications, the improvements in CLG's online applications were immediate and substantial.

"The OpenLoad tool has been instrumental in testing the functionality and scalability of our systems and the integration of our systems that run on different operating platforms," Calderone says.

Morris agrees. "The tool is very no-nonsense, very easy to use. I can export a script into an XML session ID, do a quick change, and re-import it in five minutes, and I'm done. There's no need to code. It does a lot for such a simple tool."

To this day, OpenDemand is helping the two online universities ensure that the applications it deploys go off without a hitch. And as the company continues to roll out new releases, code changes and upgrades to its applications, OpenDemand is providing any additional assistance that CLG requires.

Morris is impressed with OpenDemand's responsiveness. "I can't say enough about their customer service," she says. "Once, I had to call them at 5:00 Friday afternoon with a scripting issue and they jumped right on it and resolved the issue before 6:00."

It translates to peace of mind for the IT team, which no longer has to worry if their systems will be stable and scalable enough to support a growing student base with the performance they have come to expect. "We're their insurance policy," says Doane. "By mitigating their risk, we're ensuring customer satisfaction."

"The OpenLoad tool is meeting our needs and exceeding our expectations, and we have a great partnership relationship with OpenDemand," says Calderone.

For more information

Please contact your OpenDemand representative at: 1 973 464-8094 or info@opendemand.com.

Visit our Web site at www.opendemand.com

