School of Everything's Powerful Web Infrastructure Relies on MySQL

Education

OS: Debian Linux

Deployment Platform: Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (Amazon EC2)

Language: PHP

Database: MySQL 5.0

"The MySQL Enterprise Monitor and in particular, the MySQL Query Analyzer will really help us manage the system and improve performance as we continue to grow, we are looking forward to using them."

Peter Brownell
CTO, School of Everything

School of Everything Overview

The School of Everything is a website that helps people who want to learn meet up with people who want teach. Launched in September 2008 in London by a group of four friends who wanted to change education, School of Everything now has members throughout the world and has since gone on to win a New Statesman New Media Award and a UK Catalyst Award for contributions to Social Technology.

Teachers register online and create a personal page giving information on their lessons, the qualifications offered and the format in which they teach - for example workshops or one-to-one sessions. Potential pupils find a tutor who's right for them simply searching by subject, learning category and location. They can then send them a message, arrange to meet and begin learning their new subject. The School of Everything represents a great example of how web technologies implemented along with innovative principles of social networking can create a new service.

The Business Challenge

From the beginning of the project, The School of Everything needed a powerful web infrastructure to rapidly link teachers and learners based on the required skills and geographical location. Being a boot strapped startup they also needed a flexible and low cost infrastructure that would scale to support their growth, without requiring complex administration or maintenance. Peter Brownell, co-founder and CTO of School of Everything knew that the business challenges were going to be best addressed using open source technologies. Peter Brownell declared, "If you are passionate about coding and building things and want to do it yourself without spending large amounts of money then an open source solution based on MySQL is the only real option."

The provision of a scalable web application requires more than software infrastructure though and School of Everything were keen to minimise hardware and hosting costs. "I'd built large hardware based clusters in the past to deliver web applications and knew there was significant cost in acquisition and maintenance, we wanted to avoid these costs this time around." Continues Brownwell.

The MySQL Solution

Drupal Development based on MySQL

Peter's previous experience with Drupal made him confident the content management software could deliver the functionality School of Everything needed, and this made the selection of MySQL as the database platform very easy. "If you want to make full use of what Drupal has to offer then MySQL is by far the best choice." said Peter Brownell, CTO, The School of Everything.

Cloud Deployment using Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud

School of Everything chose to deploy MySQL and Drupal on Amazon's Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) services as this offered them the greatest flexibility. David O'Dwyer from Drupal and MySQL consulting experts SupportFour was brought onboard as a key technical advisor to The School of Everything. "The cost benefit of the cloud was clear, we were able to get our hands dirty, get things up and running very quickly and relatively cheaply compared to many of the other alternatives available to us. We started out as sceptics but soon learned to love the cloud!" said David O'Dwyer, SupportFour.

The School of Everything application was developed and deployed on Amazon EC2 within a month, and they found that the cloud platform represented the ideal infrastructure for them. Drupal uses the database centrally so School of Everything really depend upon MySQL for their scalability. Amazon's EC2 makes it really easy increase or reduce capacity very quickly to meet user demands and they leverage MySQL's built in replication and bring up new instances online in the cloud as needed.

Future Enhancements to the Service

School of Everything are continuing to develop the platform to drive both scalability and performance. For instance they have been evaluating MySQL Proxy to provide efficient scale out services and are planning to upgrade to the MySQL Enterprise Edition to take advantage of the MySQL Enterprise Monitor and MySQL Query Analyzer included in the subscription.

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SupportFour

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About MySQL

MySQL is the most popular open source database software in the world. Many of the world's largest and fastest- growing organizations use MySQL to save time and money powering their high-volume Web sites, critical business systems, and packaged software. At www.mysql.com, Sun provides corporate users with commercial subscriptions and services, and actively supports the large MySQL open source developer community.

For more information about MySQL, please go to **www.mysql.com/enterprise**

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