



EMBARK.COM CASE STUDY

Insuring 24X7 Web Access

Solution Overview

Industry

Higher Education Web Portal

Architecture

- Dell PowerEdge 6300 series servers, Quad Processor, Internal RAID
- Hitachi 8-CPU server, with 3GB RAM
- EMC Symmetrix 3830 RAID with ½ Terabyte of storage

Products Used

NSI Software Double-Take for Windows NT / 2000

Other Software Used

Microsoft Windows NT Server

Microsoft Internet Information Server

Microsoft SQL Server

EMBARK.COM is an Internet pioneer, providing thousands of students, teachers, counselors and parents with up-to-date information on college, graduate and law school. It's a higher education portal with a wealth of data on individual schools, financial aid and scholarships. Students can not only research schools on the site, but also apply for admission directly on the site. School counselors are linked to EMBARK.COM to access these applications, field questions and to provide advice. Also online are college and law school entrance exam test preparations.

All of this cutting-edge communication and functionality requires a robust IS infrastructure to work effectively. The IS professionals at EMBARK.COM rely on multiple processor servers for power, Microsoft SQL databases to process and store information, and multiple fail-safe procedures to insure the site is available all the time, every time.

SQL Database Failover

"We rely heavily on internal and external RAID systems," said Victor Wong, Senior Database Administrator at EMBARK.COM. "In addition, we employ NSI's Double-Take software to handle any database failures—if the primary database goes down, Double-Take can rapidly failover to our backup database." Since most of EMBARK.COM's site features rely heavily on SQL procedures, having seamless, continuous access to the current SQL data is critical.

"In our testing, SQL database failover happens rapidly and reliably, many times before our automated database monitors realize that the primary database is down", said Philip Joung, Director of Technology at EMBARK.COM.

Infrastructure Upgrades

Double-Take also played a key role in EMBARK.COM's recent infrastructure upgrade. The company used Double-Take to consolidate several databases and applications from three separate servers to one large 8-way server. "It cut the whole consolidation process time tremendously," Mr. Wong said. "It took us only an hour to accomplish the consolidation—with no downtime on the Web. That saved us a lot of time." Mr. Wong noted that they constantly upgrade hardware on the site, and Double-Take's unique real-time replication makes it easy to take one



"We evaluated [a competitor's product], but they weren't as flexible," noted Victor. "Double-Take's ability to work over virtually any network link, its one-to-many and many-to-one configurations let us use the product for any number of critical network chores."

Victor Wong,
Senior Database Administrator
EMBARK.COM



server offline, perform upgrades and switch effortlessly back again. "We also use Double-Take to assist with our tape backup efforts," he added. Using Double-Take on the failover or "mirrored" server allows them to perform comprehensive tape archives of the databases without impacting the ever-important performance of their online data.

"We evaluated [a competitor's product], but they weren't as flexible," noted Victor. "Double-Take's ability to work over virtually any network link, its one-to-many and many-to-one configurations let us use the product for any number of critical network chores."

Off-Site Disaster Recovery

EMBARK.COM is currently implementing a disaster recovery site at another geographic location to backup its primary Web site. In addition, EMBARK.COM is physically moving its headquarters. "I'm sure we'll be using Double-Take to replicate to the new site and then cut over—without missing a heartbeat on our site," said Victor Wong.

"The support has been excellent. The NSI team is there when we need them," added Mr. Wong.

For more information on using Double-Take® with Microsoft SQL Server, IIS and other applications, see <http://www.nsisoftware.com/solutions>



Two Hudson Place
Suite 700
Hoboken, NJ 07030
800-775-8674

www.nsisoftware.com