

Aptimize speeds up education of millions



Just as the performance of e-commerce web sites is critical to private sector businesses, web site performance is crucial to the proper functioning of school educational web sites.

With this in mind, Research Machines (RM), one of the largest education ICT providers, has deployed Aptimize's Website Accelerator (WAX) to provide faster content to users regardless of their network speed or desktop hardware.

Teachers use RM's platform to deliver online content to pupils during lessons, and pupils use the platform to submit homework or collaborate with other pupils. In addition, parents access the portal to look at the attainment levels, attendance and behaviour of their children at school. The platform is based on Microsoft's **SharePoint** 2007 collaboration and content management platform. Brian Gibson, technical architect for the RM platform, said: "RM's Learning Platform serves a demanding audience, and optimising response times is important for avoiding frustration or even disturbance in the classroom. "RM has an account for every parent, teacher and school in Scotland. It also has platforms serving the rest of the UK, which hosts 2.2 million user accounts. Gibson explained that the company also has platforms in Australia and is building one in the US.

Why roll out Aptimize?

The scenario confronting RM was different from that of normal service providers. "With a school there will be two or three classrooms with, say, 30 PCs connecting to the portal all at the same time, each of them looking at the same web site and pulling down some very rich media content," said Gibson. Where it is running off a single portal, that can lead to the system reaching a saturation point. "We're trying to improve the experience for schools. We can't use the excuse that the learning platform doesn't perform well enough because a school's internet connection is slow," explained Gibson. Aptimize was used by RM to dramatically reduce the number of connections a browser has to make to get its content. "For example, if one web page has to make, say, 50 connections [to its source] to deliver the content, this is reduced to 23 with Aptimize, so there's less time spent on that 'ropey' internet connection," said Gibson. "Aptimize reduced even our slowest pages from load times of seven seconds to just over two."

Deploying Aptimize

Gibson said that Aptimize caught his eye with the work it had done with Microsoft's **SharePoint.Microsoft.com** site. The company said that Aptimize's WAX system was relatively straightforward and that the system was implemented by just two people from the company using out-of-the-box instructions. It did not require developer skills.

Management and monitoring

RM releases fairly large updates to its platform once a quarter, meaning that every time the company releases an update it has to ensure that Aptimize deploys properly and does not break the portal. The company uses a system called Keynote to monitor the performance of its platforms by checking web pages from different DSL locations. "This gives a nice graph showing how fast the pages are running. We wanted to improve on our slowest pages (which took about seven seconds). Aptimize knocked that down to 2.5 seconds and we were able to monitor this," said Gibson. RM's future plans include using Aptimize to expand into new territories such as Australia and the US, as well on other parts of RM's online infrastructure including its management information systems.



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Microsoft **SharePoint** is a powerful platform for intranets and websites, but customers often experience slow speeds, especially across WANs and internet connections.

Accelerate your SharePoint sites instantly with Aptimize Website Accelerator

Microsoft uses Aptimize Website Accelerator to accelerate **sharepoint.microsoft.com** and **sharepoint2010.microsoft.com**, reducing load times by 40%+. The same product Microsoft uses is now available in the UK.

How it works: Minimizing network latency

SharePoint produces web pages in under a second, yet it can take 10, 20 or 30 seconds for a browser to load the page.

- This is because HTML pages are “chatty” – requiring multiple round trips to the server to load each page resource: HTML, images, scripts, and style sheets.
- This resource loading contributes 80%-90% to the page load time.
- Aptimize Website Accelerator turns “chatty” pages into “chunky” pages by dynamically merging resource files into fewer files, as well as compressing and caching them
- The result is a faster SharePoint intranet or website, with faster load times, reduced data traffic and higher server throughput.

““ We made SharePoint.Microsoft.com FAST – the improvement in page loading times is tremendous. ””

Tony Tai - Product Manager, Microsoft Corporation

Get started now

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Please get in touch if you would like to explore the idea:

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Hear more about how Aptimize helped Microsoft go to:

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