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SILVERCARROT USES GOMEZ' QA TESTING SOLUTION TO VALIDATE PEAK PERFORMANCE OF ITS IFLIPIT BANNER AD SERVICE

Overview

The SilverCarrot Group of Companies recognized these opportunities early and quickly became a pioneering leader in the online marketing space, bringing advertisers' messages directly to consumers through its continually expanding network of online publishers.

An Innovative Approach to Banner Advertising

As marketers set out to conquer the online frontier, consumers were soon inundated with incentive offers every time they logged onto the Internet. Literally hundreds of sites offering "free this or free that" started to destroy the traditional lead generation model for consumers and advertisers alike. It became increasingly difficult for advertisers to determine whether consumers genuinely expressed interest in their products to obtain more information or responded simply to receive a free product or other incentive. Lead quality deteriorated dramatically as these types of online marketing practices grew more widespread.

In 2007, SilverCarrot embarked on an initiative to address growing industry concerns about the quality, transparency and legal challenges inherent in traditional approaches to lead generation. The result was iFlipit, a powerful, targeted system that converts traditional Internet advertising banners into a source of highly qualified, non–incentivized leads and information for advertisers. With iFlipit, advertisers enjoy steady lead flow—without the need for added incentives—from high–quality, content–rich sites that are identified up front. Because iFlipit generates and captures leads from consumers who express a genuine interest in the featured product or service, advertisers enjoy higher conversion rates.

iFlipit offers unique benefits to web site publishers by increasing consumer "stickiness." Unlike traditional banners that force viewers to "click away" from the web site they were viewing. iFlipit–enabled banner ads allow consumers to respond to offers while remaining on the original page. Combining better performing ad inventory with improved viewer retention, iFlipit enables partner web sites to achieve higher revenues. What's more, iFlipit technology is easier to use than traditional rich media and delivers high CPM than the existing ad exchange model.

Putting iFlipit to the Test

Because iFlipit is a syndicated service that supplies advertisers' banner ads to a network of content–rich web sites, SilverCarrot cannot control the amount of traffic the banner ads will ultimately generate. That's why it was so important that the company take a hard look at its infrastructure capacity and ability to handle long term growth before launching the system.

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> **Barry Sirote**
> **Lead Technology Architect and Engineer, SilverCarrot**

"Based on early interest in iFlipit, we were expecting millions of consumer hits per day and wanted to be proactive in determining how much capacity our back–end system could handle," said Barry Sirote, lead technology architect and engineer for SilverCarrot. "The success of iFlipit hinged on our ability to test and verify how well our system would perform under the anticipated load and to intelligently plan our scalability moving forward."

Early in the process of evaluating load testing options, SilverCarrot's technology team took a look at Reality Load™ XF from Gomez®. Reality Load XF is an on–demand load testing product that leverages Gomez's ExperienceFirst™ network of more than 30,000 desktops at different connection speeds, ISPs, and geographies, to create a real–world simulation of the actual traffic conditions produced by end users. Unlike internal load testing that measure how well an application should perform under ideal conditions, Reality Load XF enables SilverCarrot to measure the real-world performance of iFlipit from the end user's perspective. It is one of three quality assurance services from Gomez that help organizations ensure the quality of their websites before they go live.

Because Reality Load XF is a software–as–a–service solution, SilverCarrot is able to execute load testing on demand. The tests are user defined and can be performed at any frequency or volume, focusing on the activities that are most critical to iFlipit performance. Best of all, the self–service Reality Load XF solution allows SilverCarrot to conduct load testing without the fixed upfront capital costs required for hardware and software tools.

"After evaluating the Reality Load XF solution and its affordable price point, it didn't take us long to determine that using Gomez made the most sense," commented Sirote.

Providing Proof of Performance

By enabling SilverCarrot to test the iFlipit system under increasingly heavy load conditions, Reality Load XF provides the metrics needed to win the trust of prospective partners and to mitigate risk for its expanding network of online publishers. As SilverCarrot engages in discussions with prospective iFlipit partners, the company is typically required to provide third–party data to validate its claims.

"Capacity and speed–to–load are always key concerns for our partners," stated Sirote. "When prospects ask how many seconds it will take to load a banner or how many banner impressions iFlipit can handle in a day, all we need to do is show them the Reality Load XF testing results and their concerns are put to rest."

Reality Load XF not only allows SilverCarrot to evaluate response time, availability, and consistency of iFlipit performance across various ISPs and geographies, but it also provides critical visibility into banner streaming vs. content loading performance as well as object–level detail so the company can identify performance bottlenecks and errors before they might impact the end-user experience.

Dedicated to delivering exceptional results for online marketers, SilverCarrot takes the performance of its iFlipit system very seriously. "Reality Load XF let us validate our preparedness for peak traffic volumes so we can deliver on our promises, and to date, the test results have been a very accurate reflection of system performance in live production," added Sirote.

Looking Ahead

Based on SilverCarrot's satisfaction with Reality Load XF, the company is planning to use Gomez Active Network™ XF to capture and report real–time iFlipit performance data measured from major Internet backbone locations in over 80 global cities. SilverCarrot's technology professionals believe that the detailed information provided by Active Network XF will enable them to effectively operate and maintain the fast, highly available and consistent performance its partner web sites—and their visitors across the world—expect and demand.

"Publishers, advertisers and consumers are already seeing the advantages of using iFlipit," concluded Sirote. "We plan to continue using Gomez as we grow and expand the revolutionary iFlipit banner ad service."

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