

Priceline.com:



Meeting the Demands of an Enterprise Web Application

Providing a virtual marketplace for buyers to “name their own price,” priceline.com executes tens of thousands of customer transactions each day. With revenue tied so closely to web application integrity, priceline.com can’t afford a single glitch.

Despite previous investment in web application testing and monitoring tools, priceline.com deployed Tealeaf due to its ability to scale with the enterprise and provide real-time context for dispersed data points. CIO Ron Rose says that priceline.com’s data, once “a disparate collection of archeological evidence looked at the next day,” is now centralized and in real-time. “It’s gathered in one place so we can see the real problem that the customer is having.”

Priceline.com’s entire business relies on web applications. Their flagship offering comprises reverse auctioned and heavily discounted travel services such as airfare, hotels, and rental cars. In this respect, priceline.com requires a software solution that can scale to handle tremendous volume. Their loads reach over a million page views per day, with hundreds of database updates per second. They regularly attain monthly site availability of 100 percent. But uptime isn’t the only goal. Priceline.com needs successful customer transactions to make money, which require both maximum application availability and accurate application behavior.

According to CIO Ron Rose, “Up until we began using Tealeaf, most of those tools were after-the-fact tools: Web log analytical tools and proprietary tools that we developed in house to parse the logs and examine the behaviors of the people post facto. One of the things we like about Tealeaf is that it brings that entire analytical process to the foreground, where we can look at the actual behaviors of the customer in closer to real time.”

To ensure web application health, priceline.com has leading monitoring and testing tool products as well as custom- designed instrumentation for their extensive web servers, application servers and databases. While these tools allow them to test whether their systems are up or down and whether pages load properly, the tools can’t pinpoint the magnitude and implications of any one web application issue. By using Tealeaf to access real-time user sessions and diagnose the magnitude of a user problem, priceline.com can determine which issues are minor and which carry a large-scale threat to revenue.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

priceline.com

Priceline.com offers products for sale in two categories: a travel service that offers leisure airline tickets, hotel rooms, rental cars, vacation packages and cruises; and a personal finance service that offers home mortgages, refinancing and home equity loans through an independent licensee.

RETURN ON INVESTMENTS

- > Resolved 20 significant issues in less than three months.
- > Decreased web application repair costs by 40 to 60%.
- > Decreased Mean Time to Repair (MTTR) for site defects.
- > Realized a significant reduction in customer support costs.
- > By actively monitoring web applications after each software load, TeaLeaf helps priceline.com detect problems before there is a business impact.

Priceline.com turned to Tealeaf, installing it on the application servers responsible for the travel-related applications. Very quickly, they began seeing significant benefits. Tealeaf fundamentally changed their approach to application health, as illustrated by the following examples.



I wouldn't hesitate to recommend Tealeaf to any company that has a web site which is used by consumers, and any company that wants to understand how their sites are being used.

Ron Rose | CIO, Priceline.com

ISSUE NO. 1—REAL-TIME MONITORING STOPS MISSED REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

Problem

Tealeaf alerted an administrator that the number of successful purchases was below established rates. This fact was especially troubling, as it was just prior to a very heavy travel weekend. After viewing suspect user sessions, he surmised a logic error between requested and offered prices. Although many customers were finding the bargain fares that priceline.com is noted for, many potential failed transactions were going undetected.

Solution

Using Tealeaf to delve into questionable sessions, the administrator surmised that a logic error prevented successful matches between price requests and offers. Upon discovery, the administrator simply pointed the development team to the suspect user sessions, and the team was able to identify and fix the application bug before an upcoming busy travel weekend.

Benefit

Significant revenue savings. Each incorrect price pairing meant a loss in potential revenue for the company. The administrator was able to quickly point the development team to a number of examples, enabling them to identify and fix the bug before the weekend. If he hadn't had visibility into the user perspective and couldn't communicate the context to developers, transaction either would not have occurred, or would have occurred at an incorrect price.

ISSUE NO. 2—TAKING SEARCH TO A NEW LEVEL

Problem

Arguably, priceline.com's most important feature is search. In fact, many site visitors were leaving unsatisfied because of their own inability to correctly spell their destination city. Priceline.com had previously relied upon pre-production testing tools to anticipate misspellings.

Solution

Use real user sessions containing destination misspellings to improve product by incorporating misspellings into logic.

Benefit

By anticipating end user behavior based on past user behaviors, priceline.com is able to more effectively satisfy end user searches—

despite misspellings. As CIO Rose remarks, "One of the more compelling characteristics of Tealeaf is the ability to help our developers and our marketing people focus on improvements that help customers find their products in the search functionality on the site, and use our product more effectively as a result of finding cities and airports and hotels faster and more efficiently."

ISSUE NO. 3—SELF-SERVICE REQUIRES SERVICE

Problem

Every time a customer must contact priceline.com by telephone or email, it's inefficient for the customer and an expense for priceline.com. Therefore, priceline.com invested in an automated web-based self-help system. Unfortunately, it only came with normal tools for determining how to improve the system.

Solution

With Tealeaf, priceline.com could view the customer session that precipitated a help request. The company could then improve that part of the user experience and avoid subsequent requests for help in that area. Tealeaf also enabled the company to see where in the process customers had difficulty using the self-help system.

Benefit

As a result of the visibility, context, and correlation into web session afforded via Tealeaf, priceline.com can constantly improve usefulness of the self-help system and accurately measure the degree of improvement, thus helping their customers and reducing their costs at the same time. By continually monitoring the user experience surrounding help requests and the self-help system's effectiveness, priceline.com improves overall customer satisfaction with the site.

ABOUT TEALEAF

Tealeaf is the leading provider of online customer experience management solutions. Tealeaf's CX family of solutions provides unprecedented enterprise-wide visibility into every user's unique online interactions. This "360-degree view" of the online customer experience enables a clear and consistent understanding of the customer for ebusiness, IT, customer service and legal and compliance executives and their organizations across a wide range of vertical industries including retail, banking, travel, insurance, telecommunications, pharmaceutical and transportation. Founded in 1999, Tealeaf is headquartered in San Francisco, California, and is privately-held. For more information, visit www.tealeaf.com.