



Freeseerve Case Study



"Our streaming system is the most stable and reliable system we have in our network."

Stratis Schleparis
Chief Technology Officer
Freeseerve

"With Helix Universal Servers from Real at the heart of our streaming infrastructure, we are confident our customers and partners will always benefit from the highest quality of service. Coupled with the fact that we stream all major formats from a single infrastructure, Helix gives us peace of mind and saves us considerable time and money."

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Summary

Freeseerve, the largest ISP in the UK, deployed Helix™ Universal Server from Real® to deliver its streaming content for all major formats, including RealVideo® and RealAudio®, Windows Media®, and Quicktime®. The single, consolidated infrastructure saves money, reduces complexity, and provides the highest quality of service.

Introduction

Headquartered in Hemel Hempstead, United Kingdom, and employing approximately 310 people in Hemel Hempstead, London and Leeds, Freeseerve is the largest Internet Service Provider (ISP) in the United Kingdom. Wholly owned by the Wanadoo Group, France's leading online media and services company, Freeseerve provides Internet access to nearly 3 million active users in the UK.

Freeseerve.com — the company's UK-focused portal — provides editorial comment, community functions, e-commerce opportunities, tools and services, and a wide range of specialty content areas including sites directed at women, merchant auctions, small businesses and more. The portal receives approximately 4.3 million unique visitors per month.

The Need

Freeseerve delivers streaming media as a value-added service for its existing customer base, which allows customers to experience fresh audio and video content on a regular basis. The company also provides streaming distribution to content partners who do not have the ability to distribute their own content. To increase Freeseerve's brand awareness and competitive advantage, the company also streams major events in the UK in real time and free of charge to anyone via Freeseerve.com.

Looking forward, Freeseerve views streaming media as one of the company's strategic initiatives. As Freeseerve moves toward the broadband market, the company believes that high-quality streaming audio and video will be a core driver for consumer broadband adoption and a critical element of its continued success.

Because Freeseerve has content partners that stream in different formats, the company was running three separate infrastructures: Sun and Linux servers (RealAudio, RealVideo), Compaq servers (Windows Media) and Macintosh G4s (QuickTime). Maintaining different infrastructures was expensive, time-consuming and inflexible. The company needed a better way to serve its customers and partners while increasing its competitive edge.

The Solution

Freeseerve began streaming audio and video with the first production of Big Brother UK in 2000 and has always used the latest Real streaming media technology.

In 2002, Freeseerve upgraded to Helix Universal Server, the universal digital media server from Real. Helix allowed Freeseerve to consolidate all three infrastructures into one and

stream RealAudio, RealVideo, Windows Media and QuickTime from a single platform. This significantly simplified the company's approach to streaming and substantially reduced its operating costs.

Today, Freeserve runs Helix Universal Server — with the capacity to stream in excess of 10,000 concurrent audio streams — on Compaq hardware with Windows®2000 server software.

With Helix Universal Servers from Real, Freeserve can:

- Reduce hardware costs by serving all major media formats from a single server.
- Reduce delivery costs and increase audience size by reaching 10,000 simultaneous users.
- Improve user experience and broadcast stability with server fail-over capabilities.

No other server matches the flexibility and reliability of Helix Universal Server, and no other company matches the digital media delivery expertise of Real.

Mission Accomplished

The ability to run all formats from a single platform is the biggest advantage of the Helix Universal Server. With the ability of Helix to stream any format, Freeserve consolidated its hardware infrastructure and eliminated costly and redundant media servers from its streaming services. This allowed the company to simplify its streaming infrastructure, saving time and money while delivering a more reliable product. When asked, Freeserve could not think of a single feature it wanted that Helix didn't already provide.

By upgrading to Helix and consolidating its infrastructure, Freeserve saved an initial £100,000 by eliminating unnecessary hardware and software. The company estimates an additional savings of £15,000 per month through reduced hosting and storage fees. The toll in human resources is also considerably less; Freeserve runs its streaming services with one technical person who spends approximately 15-20% of the time directly on streaming services and only 5% of that time on Helix-related issues.

Freeserve plans to deepen its core content offerings, expand in other specialty areas, and expects to see more video usage by e-commerce partners, including stores such as Boots and Dixons. In the future, Freeserve also plans to bundle specific content with its broadband offerings — a premium service separate from its existing free portal. Helix Universal Server from Real can help Freeserve achieve its media goals with high-quality delivery from a single platform and at a substantial cost savings.

About Real

Real is the global leader in Internet media delivery. It develops and markets software products and services designed to enable users of personal computers and other consumer electronic devices to send and receive audio, video and other multimedia services using the Web.

Contact Real Today

Discover how the Helix Universal Media Server from Real can help your organisation simplify its streaming infrastructure, reduce costs and deliver a more reliable product. Visit us at www.realnworks.com or contact a sales representative at **1-800-444-8011**.



*"Helix Universal Servers
run themselves."*

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Chief Technology Officer
Freeserve

