ClearDB Powers Mission-Critical Customer Portal for Colt Data Centre Services

Founded in 1991, Colt Technology Services is a global network services provider and innovator. The company builds high bandwidth networks and voice communications for corporate clients in Europe, Asia, and North America. Colt connects nearly 900 customer data centres around the world with leading-edge network fibre and computing technology. Colt employs 4,500 people and works with many more through its technology partners.

The Colt Data Centre Services business unit (DCS) provides data centre colocation services and builds and manages 27 data centres serving more than 1,000 colocation clients. Colt DCS is 100 percent carrier neutral and supports all major cloud platforms, so customers can choose colocation services and hybrid cloud connectivity from all over the world. The business unit has achieved the highest possible scores in the Uptime Institute's Management and Operations award.

Offerings range from rack space, to cages and dedicated suites, all the way to fully customized enterprise-level environments. Colt DCS offers a full range of data centre services that can be combined and customized to meet specific customer needs. Additional value-added services are available to all customers.

Colt DCS prides itself on the highest levels of customer service. Customers choose flexible levels of support depending on their current needs, whether they are migrating a single project to a Colt data centre or creating an entirely new compute environment. No matter what level of support customers choose, Colt DCS proactively supports service requirements.

Of course, even this level of customer service is irrelevant without a systems infrastructure that delivers 24x7 customer access to their colocation environment and operations. Colt DCS depends on its expert team to select leading edge technologies in the development of mission critical applications to deliver on this promise. One such application is the company's always-on customer portal, which leverages the power and reliability of ClearDB's database as a service.

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Challenge

Colt DCS set out to build a customer portal application in MySQL. The IT team knew they wanted to partner with a fully managed MySQL provider who could deliver world-class database resiliency, with geographic redundancy. The reason? Colt DCS could not fail its customers, and its database provider could not fail Colt.

Colt DCS decided to use Microsoft Azure for global scale and ClearDB, a fully managed database-as-a-service (DBaaS), for customer management and portal access. The ClearDB service is fully transparent to Colt's customers but is at the center of an Always-On experience.

Results

Resiliency

Romain Tranchant, IT Transformation Director said, "We depend on our databases to manage our customer base and optimize customer portals. Our database uptime and resiliency are paramount."

ClearDB's highly available architecture ensures that DCS customers never lose access to their customer portals. Its specialized database clusters are standard MySQL databases wrapped in software stacks that keep the clusters highly available and always online. ClearDB clusters practice master-master replication between nodes, so a failing node will not take down a cluster.

Geo-Redundancy

ClearDB is not only resilient within local clusters, but it is also geo-redundant. If one location's infrastructure fails, the other location continues to process the database without interruption. This isn't always the case with managed services.

In fact, Colt DCS has used both ClearDB and Microsoft Azure Database for MySQL to manage its customer databases. They were using ClearDB on Azure when they decided to test the Azure MySQL managed offering.

However, it turned out that the Azure MySQL service was geographically located in a single Azure region. Although the database architecture was resilient within that data centre, if the infrastructure went down then so did its managed MySQL customers. (It isn't just Azure: An Amazon EC2 service outage in a single U.S. location cut off access for millions of customers.[1])

Tranchant and his team returned to ClearDB because the provider replicates data between geo-redundant locations. Service continuity is a mission-critical offering for Colt, and the team will not risk customer portal downtime. With ClearDB, they don't have to. He said, "Azure Database for MySQL doesn't provide geo-redundancy, and I don't think they will for the foreseeable future. ClearDB already provides it. For us, the choice was obvious."

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Customer Support

ClearDB's standard service works smoothly out of the box. However, Colt DCS needed a partner who would work with them to customize MySQL settings and service level agreement (SLA). ClearDB customer support did exactly that and did it quickly and well. Tranchant said, "We went to them with additional requirements. They took our requirements and installed and tested them. All we had to do was go on the Azure interface and trigger the service. It just worked."

And ClearDB puts its customer support money where its mouth is. Many providers claim that they offer high uptime in their SLAs but are reluctant to customize specific service level requirements for individual business customers. ClearDB in an exception and backs up their 100% uptime guarantee with flexible SLAs that are optimized for customer needs.

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[1] "Summary of the Amazon S3 Service Disruption in Northern Virginia (US-EAST-1) Region"

Value

MySQL is a relatively simple database architecture, and some IT departments choose to forego managed database services and run it themselves. However, any money they save on managed services goes to capital and operating costs: buying the application and computing equipment and hiring DBAs and IT support staff.

Tranchant explained, "Value is a key point for me. With ClearDB, I have never had to put any of my resources into database troubleshooting and support. We can focus on our customer service instead of wondering why our database isn't working, and why our customers can't access their equipment. That is the most valuable thing to us."

Needs

Colt DCS needed critical customer databases to be resilient and geo-redundant, highly cost-effective, and fully managed. ClearDB fit the bill. Its resilient/geo-redundant architecture maintains 100 percent uptime for DCS customers and its advanced cluster technology enables Colt DCS to scale seamlessly with double-digit customer growth. Proactive customer support enables DCS to provide 100 percent service continuity to its own customers.

Tranchant described their needs. "We needed an extremely stable and very well managed database service. And because we're experiencing double-digit growth, we didn't want to worry about database usage spikes affecting our data centre power, CPUs, or storage. We know that the managed database won't fail when demand rises."

Value

Colt DCS finds high value in entrusting its critical customer databases to ClearDB. Since ClearDB offers fully managed services, companies such as Colt can concentrate on their primary business instead of spending time managing databases.

Tranchant concluded, "The biggest benefit is that we don't have to worry about it. The whole point of outsourcing for us is that we know it just works. Which is exactly why it's great, and why we are staying with them."

Benefits
- Resiliency
- Geo-redundancy
- Customer support
- Value
- Managed services

ABOUT CLEARDB

ClearDB is an enterprise-class DBaaS provider offering MySQL as a service in the world's largest public clouds. When you subscribe to ClearDB you embrace a faster, stronger, safer and more reliable way to get data to your MySQL applications, no matter where you are in the world. With a global architecture, scheduled backups, advanced security, always on monitoring, easy management APIs, and 24/7 customer support, we give you all that you need to leverage the benefits of a single or multi-cloud solution. ClearDB creates multi-master with optional multi-replica MySQL configurations in regions throughout the world to provide your applications with a fully redundant solution that can service outages, network failures, and even natural disasters. You choose how much computing power and storage you need, we set it all up so that you have a secure, powerful and reliable MySQL database that bests serves your needs. For more information, visit www.cleardb.com