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Thirty-One Gifts Uses Cyara to Automate Load Testing of New, SIP-Based Routing Platform

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Chuck Sunker, Manager,
Consultant Support Systems
Thirty-One Gifts

No Busy Signals for 80,000 Home-Based Consultants at Fast-Growing, Direct Sales Company Thirty-One Gifts

thirty-one™

BACKGROUND

Thirty-One Gifts, an Ohio-based direct sales fashion and accessory company, is one of the fastest growing direct sales companies in the United States with 1,500 employees and a network of over 80,000 sales consultants nation- wide. The company was started in 2003 by Cindy Monroe, a working mother of two, and her husband in the basement of their family home after she realized busy women like her had no time to shop boutiques given their busy schedules.

The company's name is derived from Proverbs 31 which honors woman in part as kind, hardworking, smart, efficient and business savvy. The name reflects the mission and philosophy of the company -- to celebrate, encourage and reward women by offering quality products and an outstanding business opportunity to become successful business owners. Many of the company's 80,000 consultants are women with full-time jobs at other companies or stay-at-home moms looking for a way to earn extra money; they are busy.

BUSY WOMEN GETTING BUSY SIGNALS NOT AN OPTION AT DIRECT SALES COMPANY

Busy women getting busy signals when calling in for order support and care is not an option. Critical to the success of Thirty-One is making sure consultants who place their orders over the web can get phone order support from agents when calling in to one of the two contact centers.

 In support of their rapid growth, the company recently upgraded to a new (Session Initiation Protocol) SIP-based contact center routing platform and grew port capacity from 300 concurrent calls to 1,000 concurrent calls to support growth and expected call spikes.

Consultants frequently call into one of the two contact centers at the end of the month or seasonally in support of their web-based ordering. Calls handled by over 250 representatives located at the two centers are very campaign-related with volumes going from a few thousand calls a day to 10,000 calls-per-day spikes.

Thirty-One implemented the Cyara Solution Suite in September of 2011 for load testing to validate the new platform infrastructure and ensure the successful deployment and upgrade of their new SIP-based contact center routing platform. The company uses SIP trunks and a data center in one location housing their IP switch and routing platform, which feeds the two call centers at separate sites.

"Making sure calls were routed successfully and that we had no voice degradation was the point of the testing," says Thirty One's Chuck Sunker, manager, consultant support systems. During the testing phase, the company discovered only half of their port capacity was operational due to a configuration issue between their switch and carrier.

TELECOM CAPACITY ISSUES UNCOVERED DURING CYARA LOAD TESTING

The leap from one SIP trunk to the next wasn't occurring says Sunker. "Through testing with Cyara, we uncovered a configuration issue between the carrier and the data center that was limiting the number of calls that we could receive."

Just three days after deployment of the new system that included the increased port capacity, Thirty-One exceeded the pre-test concurrent call volume capacity with the expected, end-of-the month calls, which would have resulted in consultants getting busy signals, had they not identified and fixed the issue.

"If we had not identified and resolved the constraints of the call routing, our consultants would have experienced a large number of busy signals and we would have not been able to provide essential order support to our consultants trying to close out their sales month. But with our expanded capacity, we were able to avoid any order delays or financial impact to our consultants, which is always a crucial objective for our group. Cyara helped us discover capacity issues during load testing which meant we avoided negative outcomes," says Sunker.

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"I would say without a doubt finding the 50 percent capacity restraint in the first load test instantly justified to me that Cyara is a great investment," he says. "We certainly found issues that we wouldn't have found without Cyara."

ROUTING STRATEGIES IMPROVED; CALLS-PER- SECOND METRIC INCREASED
Thirty-One's calls-per-second (CPS) metric was also much lower than anticipated upon initial testing. "We were able to go through log files and find out where we needed to make changes in the routing strategies and in our systems to improve performance. Some of it had to do with the way we were actually doing disconnects on abandoned calls, " explains Sunker.

"Cyara revealed that the way our routing strategy was validating the CTI data on every phone call was additional overhead in time and money," says Sunker.   Database dips against their customer relationship management (CRM) database, which adds an extra two to three seconds and is charged on a per dip basis, were done on every phone call, even when it was a null value, says Sunker. "We identified these types of issues and fixed them quickly, retested and validated that the fixes worked correctly and got the calls per second up higher," says Sunker.

CYARA: INTUITIVE INTERFACE, GREAT TESTING FACILITY AND CUSTOMER CONTROL
Sunker says he's used other testing solutions in the past, but Cyara's approach was a deciding factor in choosing a load testing solution. Past experience with other solutions meant dependence on the vendor to create and write the testing scripts with limited ability for tweaking, says Sunker.

"Cyara is very intuitive and the testing facility was great, allowing us to very quickly build and validate new test scripts," says Sunker. "With Cyara, we could write the scripts ourselves and get the intervals that we wanted for the test cycles. The support was there if needed, but we were ultimately able to write the scripts ourselves. Cyara gave us abilities to direct the calls that we wanted to do at a last-minute notice without requiring a two-week lead time."

Sunker, who is responsible for all of Thirty-One's call center technologies and in making sure the technologies are in support of the company's overall mission says, "in hard dollars Cyara surely pays for itself." "But, I think in soft dollars," says Sunker, "how valuable is it that a customer doesn't get a busy signal? Some may consider that a soft value, but we view it as mission critical."

"Cyara revealed that the way our routing strategy was validating every phone call was a huge waste of resources and time."

Chuck Sunker, Manager,
Consultant Support Systems, Thirty-One Gifts

ABOUT THIRTY-ONE GIFTS
Thirty-One is one of the fastest growing, direct-selling companies in the country and is the number one direct-selling brand of exclusive, stylish and practical handbags, fashion accessories, totes and organization solutions. Through the direct-sales Party Plan model, Thirty-One offers exclusive products for the home and a woman's busy lifestyle –all of which are available through a Thirty-One Independent consultant in your area. Thirty-One corporate headquarters is located in Columbus, OH. For more information, visit www.thirtyonegifts.com.

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ABOUT CYARA
Cyara is a pioneer of next-generation premise and cloud-based solutions for simulating, testing and monitoring IVRs, voice biometrics, outbound dialers, voice callback and other contact center systems and applications. Cyara tests end-to-end contact center customer and agent experience in a repeatable, automated manner and ensures exemplary system operation, emulating live calls without requiring or impeding live customers or agents.