

# Sam Media Ltd.



## Mobile entertainment content provider gains uptime assurance with Stratus Avance software

### Business situation

Sam Media Ltd. is in the business of bringing entertainment to subscribers' mobile phones. The company works with local partners to market and deliver popular content that includes videogames, text-based games, ringtones and wallpapers. With offices in Kuala Lumpur, Amsterdam, Hanoi and Jakarta, Sam Media reaches mobile phone users in 20 countries.

Behind the scenes, that means SMS (short message service) traffic and data messages constantly pass between the company's servers and its partners' servers worldwide. Mini-websites — or landing pages, as they're known to online marketers — are continuously served to potential customers as well. Advertising partners earn a commission every time a mobile phone user subscribes to one of Sam Media's entertainment offerings. Other partners such as telecom operators also take their share from each SMS sent.

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Regional Operations Director  
Sam Media Ltd.

### QUICK FACTS

#### SOLUTION PROFILE

- Business-critical platform for subscription management, content delivery and online advertising
- Subscription services reach mobile phone users in 20 countries
- Built-in high availability is easy to manage by small IT team
- Virtualization isolates production servers from test and reporting servers

#### PRODUCTS

- Stratus Avance® high availability software
- Industry-standard x86 servers
- Red Hat® Enterprise Linux® operating system
- MySQL database

#### SERVICES

- Avance Software Support Services

Uptime. **All the time.**



“It’s very important to have our systems up and running all the time,” explained Robert Bos, regional director of operations in Sam Media Ltd.’s Kuala Lumpur office. “We need to receive, process and send out messages and deliver website page requests. Traffic comes from and goes to our partners and customers in real time, 24/7. As soon as our system is not available, we lose sales. And relationships with our partners and customers are damaged.”

He added, “Many of our advertising partners have dynamic systems. If they see sales volumes dropping, they can easily swap our advertisements for somebody else’s in real time.”

### Business objectives

The company was using RAID to mirror data stored on disk, but that only provided limited redundancy. The IT team wanted to extend high availability to the application processing that provides real-time interaction with Sam Media Ltd.’s partners and also assure the mini-websites, or landing pages, are always up.

The search for a high-availability solution was already in progress when Bos joined Sam Media. As he and the IT staff continued to evaluate products from different vendors, a few main objectives stood out:

- Deliver high availability to support business-critical subscription management, content delivery and online advertisements
- Provide uptime assurance beyond the RAID-only data mirroring
- Use virtualization to create separate servers for test and reporting
- Keep cost and training requirements to a bare minimum

One issue was that many competitors’ products were essentially server clusters that required a storage area network (SAN). The expense was a huge obstacle for a small to medium enterprise (SME) like Sam Media Ltd.

“Other solutions we looked at needed central storage to build a high availability solution. You had this whole box, a storage box, that we don’t really need from a capacity point of view,” said Bos. “We don’t have terabytes of data online. It was overkill for us.”

A steep learning curve was another drawback with many solutions. “There’s investment not only in the hardware and the software but also in the training and in people. And people are away from their normal daily jobs,” Bos noted.

### The Stratus Avance solution

When the Avance solution emerged as a contender, Bos recognized a trusted brand in Stratus Technologies. He had experience working with uptime-assuring products from Stratus in the 1990s (at the time, server hardware and an operating system). Bos observed, “It’s a good feeling to work with Stratus. And Avance software turned out to be about half the cost of other approaches because you don’t need a SAN just to get high availability.”

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The company uses the Avance HA environment to support the services at the heart of its business, which are based on technologies including the Red Hat Enterprise Linux operating system, a MySQL database and custom-built applications.

Stratus Avance software turns industry-standard computer servers into a highly reliable, very affordable solution that ensures uninterrupted uptime. Built-in predictive features identify, report and handle faults before they cause application outages, data loss or user disconnects. Automatic resource sharing among the x86 server pair lets applications automatically ride through most hardware and software problems, including disk and network subsystem failure.

Sam Media Ltd. engaged IVT, an enterprise IT infrastructure specialist and a Stratus Technologies affiliate in Malaysia, to help with implementation and training.

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**Robert Bos**  
Regional Operations Director

### **Virtualized production, test and reporting servers**

The virtualization included in Avance software allowed Sam Media Ltd. to consolidate the physical Web servers at its main data center in Kuala Lumpur.

Perhaps even more important, the company took the opportunity to set up separate virtual

machines to isolate testing and reporting. The separation ensures these functions don’t affect production operations. Two virtual machines initially run the production applications; testing and reporting each have their own VMs.

Bos spells out the advantages. “The idea of virtualization is for us, very appealing. Having virtualization means we can do the isolation without multiple physical servers, which is complex when you need highly available solutions. It is easier to have all these virtual servers within the Avance environment.”

### **Installation and training in half a day**

People’s time in the very competitive mobile entertainment industry is precious. That’s especially true at the fast-growing 50-person firm, which has an IT staff of 10. Bos says the company’s technical staff focuses on application development and can’t afford to spend many hours on IT administration.

In addition, the demands on staff time increased when Sam Media Ltd. migrated from the Microsoft® Windows® operating system to the Red Hat Enterprise Linux OS (both supported by Avance software).

With that in mind, staff training took place on the job. Two members of the team accompanied IVT, the Stratus affiliate, to the data center while the Avance solution was installed. The IT pros used the half-day of installation to become familiar with Avance high availability.

“You don’t have to be a developer to understand how Avance software works and how to manage it,” stated Bos. “And you don’t need to spend three days in a class to get an understanding. The learning curve is very quick.”

## 24-hour support

The Avance software monitors server operation predictively to prevent unplanned downtime and data loss. If the software detects signs of a problem on the primary server, it isolates the fault and automatically migrates the workload to the secondary server while applications keep running.

A Stratus support contract adds to the peace of mind. In the event that Avance software detects a problem condition, Sam Media's IT staff and the Stratus 24-hour support center would be alerted automatically about the type of fault and its location.

## Business impact

Although Sam Media Ltd. put Avance high availability into production recently, the company is already satisfied its business objectives have been achieved.

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Bos emphasizes that he and the IT team still have a big job ahead of them because the company continues to grow in a continuously changing global market. The fact that Avance HA is self-healing and self-managing is a significant advantage, because it requires almost no attention from the busy professionals.

He summarizes the impact that Avance high availability is making at Sam Media Ltd. “The Stratus Avance solution works and it includes 24/7 monitoring. As an operations director, I don't have sleepless nights.”

## About Stratus

Stratus delivers uptime for the applications its customers depend on most for their success. With its ultra-reliable servers, software and services, Stratus® products help to save lives and to protect the business and reputations of companies, institutions, and governments the world over.

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