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Kyle Ohme  
IT Director, Freeze.com

## Freeze.com streamlines IT operations with Citrix Provisioning Server

Launched in 2001, Minnesota-based Freeze.com is a global, interactive media company delivering marketing solutions with measurable results. The company is able to offer consumers free digital content and products through an ad-supported model. By providing users with online entertainment content including screensavers, wallpapers and games, Freeze.com has built a global consumer base.

### The challenge – Increase IT’s ability to meet demand fluctuations

Freeze.com’s business model creates significant spikes in demand on its computing infrastructure. In order to deliver a high-quality experience to retain customers, the company wanted to ensure that its computing infrastructure could handle peak demands. Freeze.com faced the need to expand its datacenter infrastructure to handle these peak loads, which would erode profits in an already competitive environment.

The key challenges Freeze.com faced in its datacenter operations were: maximizing server utilization without overbuilding or underbuilding; avoiding unnecessary layers of software that could impact performance; repurposing servers to support extraordinary but temporary web site activity; ensuring a disaster recovery site could reflect the current state of the active site; provisioning development and test beds in minutes rather than hours; and reducing the IT staff time needed to provision servers and spending more time on value-added processes.

IT Director Kyle Ohme said, “We needed a solution that would assist in providing a responsive and reliable infrastructure capable of adapting to high demand and rapid shifts in traffic. We needed something that could scale to four times the normal number of web servers without requiring four times the space, hardware and staff.”



## Implementing Citrix Provisioning Server for Datacenters

### Key benefits

- Allows company to handle peak server loads without overprovisioning
- Enhances business flexibility and supports growth
- Simplifies IT administration and allows staff to focus on strategic projects
- Provides a foundation for disaster recovery

### Networking environment

- Citrix Provisioning Server for Datacenters
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003, Web Server Edition
- IBM® BladeCenter® and HS20 Blades

Because the stakes were high in terms of potential savings, Freeze.com invested the necessary resources to identify the best solution to meet its challenges. The company considered Citrix Provisioning Server™ for Datacenters, as well as iSCSI (Internet Small Computer Interface) and native storage area network (SAN) remote boot technologies, and third-party server management suites.

Remote boot features of SAN or iSCSI solutions required that Freeze.com purchase proprietary hardware such as host bus adaptors (HBAs) or storage switches. Citrix Provisioning Server for Datacenters is a software-only solution that delivers the desired capability without locking in any particular hardware component. Other third-party server management approaches required a complete copy of the operating system to be delivered to every server, a cumbersome, time-consuming, inflexible and error-prone process. With Citrix Provisioning Server, the administrator can simply assign a configuration to a particular group of blades. When these blades are rebooted, the new configuration is streamed on demand.

### Handling peak loads with ease

Freeze.com met its challenges by utilizing Citrix Provisioning Server for Datacenters functionality to re-allocate blades during peak load periods. Citrix Provisioning Server streams a server workload out to several blades from networked storage, rather than copying the entire workload onto each blade. This approach enables Freeze.com to quickly re-provision back-office blades to expand the footprint of the front-end web server farm. After a campaign runs its course, Freeze.com quickly returns those borrowed blades to back-office workloads. If the back office needs additional capacity to catch up on backlog, Freeze can re-purpose front-end blades for these tasks.

“We have only begun to realize how easy we have it now,” said Ohme. “With Citrix Provisioning Server, what was once a tedious task of reprovisioning servers is now as fast as a mouse click. With Citrix Provisioning Server we have built a full, fault-tolerant workload environment that allows us to recover to multiple datacenters if needed. Our storage and backups all reside in a few key areas now—not several as in a typical environment.”

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