



Despegar.com Speeds Time to Market for New Travel Services

Overview

Despegar.com is the largest online travel firm in Latin America and the fifth largest in the world. Since its founding in 1999, Despegar has expanded into 21 countries across North America, South America, and Europe, including Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Spain and the United States.

Taking its name from the Spanish word meaning “to take off”, Despegar enables customers to research travel plans and book airline, hotel and car rental reservations online. Recently, the company shifted its focus to providing personalised holiday packages using data and algorithms to predict customers’ preferences.

“Despegar is different because we strive to customise the user’s experience,” says Nicolás Plá, Despegar IT manager. “By generating customised packages, we generate client loyalty and increase the likelihood of purchase.”

Differentiation Through Personalisation

As Despegar grew and expanded its offerings, the company needed a faster way to deliver infrastructure resources to its application developers. Developers were constrained by processes that slowed them down and limited productivity to three to five application deployments per week. Developers depended on IT administrators to provision the infrastructure and deploy the applications or updates, which caused traffic jams and hampered deployment.

“To avoid downtime we’d come in at 4 a.m.,” explains Claudio Martinez, a developer at Despegar. “The developers would set up the package and the administrators would install it. If things went wrong, we’d start to develop a queue. If you weren’t in before the maintenance window closed at 7 a.m., you wouldn’t get to install your update.”

With data volume doubling every year, Despegar needed a better way to support the efforts of its developers. To improve time to market, the company looked for ways to enable fast self-service provisioning using cloud-based development environments.

Fuelling Developer Innovation

Despegar unleashed developer innovation by building a private cloud based on OpenStack with NetApp clustered Data ONTAP. The company was attracted to NetApp’s proven storage and data management expertise and long history of leadership in the OpenStack community.

“NetApp is committed to OpenStack, which gives us a lot of comfort as we move forward with our private cloud initiatives,” says Plá. “We like working with NetApp because they work with us to develop innovative solutions that grow with our business.”

“We have worked with NetApp from the start of our company, and we value their collaboration and partner network,” adds Germán Anders, storage manager at Despegar. “The services they provide give us a competitive advantage.”

Key Highlights

Challenge

Accelerate innovation and time to market for personalised features and travel services.

Solution

OpenStack private cloud based on NetApp® storage with the clustered Data ONTAP® operating system to deliver non-stop availability for development environments and online services.

Results

- Accelerate new application deployment and updates from 3 to 5 per week to 300+ per day.
- Speed provisioning of infrastructure from hours to minutes.
- Enable developers to self-provision IT resources.
- Drive personalisation of new services and applications through big data.
- Improve the customer experience and attract new online users.

Taking Off

Today, with an OpenStack private cloud based on NetApp clustered Data ONTAP, Despegar maintains 24/7 availability, with no maintenance downtime. The solution can easily scale to accommodate the company's 100% annual data growth and move data non-disruptively to optimise performance. Best of all, developers can provision and manage IT resources on demand, without assistance from IT.

"With the OpenStack and NetApp solution, we were able to reduce implementation time and empower developers to implement their applications themselves in a timely manner," says Anders.

Despegar's developers can now quickly release features and updates that will attract new visitors to the site and convert them into customers. Across the company, developers have increased deployments of new applications and updates from 3 to 5 per week to more than 300 per day. A developer working on a new hotel application or feature can deploy the application in the same day and make changes in real time based on user feedback.

The solution also enables the company to use big data and analytics to personalise the user experience and provide customers the features they want. Data on user patterns and preferences – everything from purchase histories to user reviews – is run through algorithms that suggest personalised travel designations and offers. Developers can also access that data to better understand the needs of the market and quickly develop, implement, and test new solutions.

"We gather a large amount of data from social media and user comments," adds Anders. "With the solution, we are now able to store more data and analyse it to provide better services to our clients."

Recently, the company launched and completed on its website a massive Dias de Descuentos limited-time promotion, which provided discounts of up to 50% on flights, hotels, packages and activities. With the speed and flexibility of its infrastructure, Despegar was able to develop and deploy the promotion quickly. And due to the success of the programme, the company quickly extended the promotion to capitalise on a seasonal demand for holiday travel bookings.

"With the new solution, we are able to quickly roll out new promotions and respond to customer demand in real time," says Plá. "This gives us a big competitive advantage."



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Germán Anders, Storage Manager, Despegar

Soaring to New Heights

Around the world, online and mobile commerce are rapidly replacing traditional commerce. Despegar expects that over the next 5 to 10 years, online travel bookings in Latin America will grow by 30%. The company hopes to harness the speed and flexibility of its private cloud solution to accelerate that evolution and maintain its competitive edge.

"The future is online and the key to success is mobility: giving customers the ability to purchase from tablets and phones," explains Plá. "With the power of OpenStack and NetApp, we can meet the needs of our users with a faster website, data-driven innovations and personalised results."

About Despegar

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About NetApp

Leading organisations worldwide count on NetApp for software, systems and services to manage and store their data. Customers value our teamwork, expertise and passion for helping them succeed now and into the future.