CASE STUDY

LinkedIn China

Neo4j Decreases Development Time-to-market for LinkedIn's Chitu App

INDUSTRY
Technology

GOAL
Decrease time-to-market to effectively compete with other social networking sites

CHALLENGE
To launch a social networking platform as quickly as possible while allowing room for significant user and feature growth and search large volumes of data with no performance issues

SOLUTION
Neo4j's ease of use and database speed allowed Chitu to launch its first version in a matter of months

RESULTS
– Reduced time to market to increase market share
– Faster processing speed, resulting in better performance for users

The Chitu development team needed to launch a new social platform in record time if it wanted to attract a meaningful segment of the Chinese professional networking market. Taking advantage of the tools offered by Neo4j — especially its ease of use — Chitu has become one of the fastest-growing social networks in China.

The Company

Chitu is a social network app local to the Chinese market and specifically targeted to young professionals who have recently joined the workforce. The company was launched by LinkedIn but operates as an entirely separate entity and boasts almost a million users across the country.

The Challenge

LinkedIn as a social network for professionals is geared mostly towards English-speaking international users with advanced careers looking to further expand their networks globally. But the company noticed a large, untapped market: young professionals in China who were new to the workforce.

To reach this demographic, the company launched Chitu which seeks to engage jobseekers through a game-like user interface that is available on both desktop and mobile devices. Not unlike LinkedIn, the tool provides users with the opportunities to grow their networks via connections and direct messaging, but also provides opportunities for in-person meetings and networking events.

But Chitu is not the first — or only — professional networking tool for young professionals in China. For this reason, company leadership knew that getting the application up and running as quickly as possible would be crucial if they wanted to be able to capture a sizeable portion of the market.

"The challenge was speed," said Dong Bin, Manager of Development at Chitu. "Due to the rate of growth we saw from our competitors in the Chinese market, we knew that we had to launch Chitu as quickly as possible."

And because their application would be open to a huge number of workers, Chitu also had to be ready to handle rapid growth both in terms of number of users and available features.

The Strategy

Leadership at Chitu knew that a relational database — with complicated tables and JOINS — would not effectively accommodate the extensive and complicated networks between its users.

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The company tried using MySQL, but there were so many connections between users — alliances, membership connections, friendships and more — that the data structure was overly-complex, difficult to manage and caused their app to suffer in terms of performance.

This led to a search for a database that could intuitively describe a graph, which brought Chitu straight to Neo4j. Why?

"Because Neo4j is the number one graph database in the graph database market," said Dong Bin.

And with the wide variety of online tools provided by Neo4j — including books, videos and robust customer support — the Chitu DevOps team was able to quickly learn how to use Neo4j. A few short days after being introduced to the database, the team was able to start programming.

The Solution

Neo4j was the missing piece for Chitu. The engineering team immediately noticed the difference in Neo4j's processing speed, especially related to MySQL, and programming was incredibly easy. Queries can now be performed in record time, and the company was able to launch the first version of its application in only four months.

The Results

The savings (in terms of both time and money) were significant for Chitu after they switched to Neo4j. Leaving MySQL behind allowed the company to forego paying for a full-time database administrator.

The Neo4j platform is so easy to use and maintain that the company was able to decrease the size of its DevOps team and refocus time and resources towards expanding its user base. And because of the whiteboard model, the communication time and cost between developers has decreased significantly.

In the near future, Chitu will take advantage of additional functions of Neo4j — such as its ability to perform influencer calculations — to grow its user base and make the platform more robust.

About Neo Technology

Neo Technology is the creator of Neo4j, world's leading graph database. Neo4j is a highly scalable native graph database that leverages data relationships as first-class entities to help companies build intelligent applications that meet today's evolving connected data challenges including fraud detection, real-time recommendations, master data management, network security and IT operations.

Enterprises like Walmart, UBS, Cisco, HP, adidas and Lufthansa and hot startups like Medium, Musimap and Glowbl rely on Neo4j to harness the connections in their data.

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