



“Assistance during the load testing has been second to none.”

– Ashley Snowden,
Service Transition Manager,
NHBC

Neustar Balances the Load for the NHBC

The Challenge

NHBC (National House Building Council) is the leading home warranty and insurance provider for new homes in the UK. For over 80 years, NHBC has been committed to driving up quality and raising standards in house-building. Its ten-year Buildmark warranty covers around 80 percent of new homes built in the UK, having covered nearly eight million homes since it began and currently protecting around 1.6 million homes.

NHBC supports the industry by maintaining and improving the build quality of new homes for homebuyers through a wide range of activities; from standards setting through technical support, to warranty and insurance. As a non-profit distributing organisation with no shareholders, NHBC invests any surplus into activities that improve new homes further, in particular through its research arm, the NHBC Foundation.

NHBC provides a multitude of services to builders, homeowners and housing associations via its online customer portals. As the leading provider of these services in the UK, it is important that NHBC ensures the availability of its online service. One way it can do this is testing prior to launching a new customer portal to check that it is able to handle the anticipated visitor traffic.

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The Neustar Solution

NHBC decided that it wanted to load test prior to going live with a small web application it had developed. Ashley Snowdon, Service Transition Manager for NHBC, explains:

"This was our first engagement with Neustar. We didn't anticipate a high user load, but we still wanted to validate that the service could handle the anticipated load. We reviewed various load testing solutions and Neustar came out on top for price, usability, scalability and flexibility. We were able to use Neustar's load testing capabilities without any assistance from their support for this primary engagement, although we did ask for some assistance from their online free community forums."

The load testing for this first service went well, but NHBC wanted to dig deeper into the results for its next engagement. It returned to Neustar when it had some newly developed customer portals which would have an even greater anticipated load.

"This time round we decided to go for Neustar Web Load Testing, and a yearly load testing package with added white glove support. The main challenge we knew we would have here would be that the user journeys would be more complex and thus harder to script. But Neustar's dedicated engineers were on hand to assist with scripting and were also able to provide detailed analysis on the results of the testing so we could learn from the process," continues Ashley Snowdon.

The Results

NHBC currently uses two services from Neustar Web Performance Management line. Firstly, it subscribes to Neustar's fully managed load testing package including its white glove support and they have been using this capability for about three years. Always with an eye for ensuring its service availability is as expected, six months ago NHBC decided to add Neustar Webmetrics Web Performance Monitoring: "This provides us with an early warning sign of any outage or any performance issues," says Ashley.

"The load testing challenges were solved by our Neustar engineer. All the engineers we have worked with have gone above and beyond our expectations, and our current engineer has really gone out of his way to get to grips with our web portals and their user journeys. His assistance during the load testing has been second to none and his guidance during these tests has really helped us get the best performance from our portals. He has also been extremely helpful with the monitoring," Snowden said.

"Although in a different time zone, there are no communication issues; we are always kept up to date and Neustar is even able to perform load testing that may be outside of their normal working hours. I have never once debated about picking up the phone to one of the Neustar team as I know anything I ask of them will be addressed enthusiastically and, to sound cliché... with a smile!" concludes Ashley Snowdon.