



video case

chapter 3 Building an E-commerce Presence

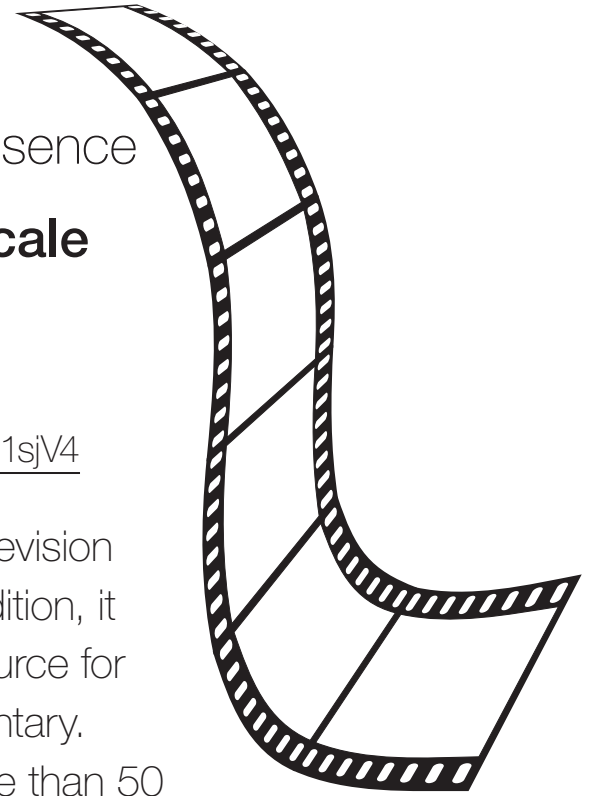
case 1 **ESPN Goes to eXtreme Scale**

**watch the
video at**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIqru81sjV4>

summary

ESPN is the world's largest cable television sports programming network. In addition, it is the Web's most popular online source for sports results, content, and commentary. Servicing an online audience of more than 50 million unique visitors every month requires ESPN to adopt processing technologies that are extremely efficient, powerful, and flexible. L= 5:40.



case

ESPN (Entertainment and Sports Programming Network) is a multimedia, global cable television network with headquarters in Bristol, Connecticut. Founded in 1979 with financing provided by The Getty Oil Company, ESPN grew along with the cable television industry to become a mainstay of American popular culture. After a series of investments by Hearst Publications, and ABC (the American Broadcasting Network), 80% of ESPN finally ended up in the hands of entertainment giant The Walt Disney Company, and 20% with the Hearst Corporation, a 100 year-old media company based largely on newspaper and magazine businesses. ESPN focuses on sports programming including live and pre-taped event telecasts, sports talk shows, and other original programming. While originally a cable media company, ESPN has since expanded aggressively to the Internet as well as radio and print magazines.

continued

ESPN is actually a family of sports networks and individual shows. There are eight 24-hour domestic television sports networks: ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNEWS, ESPN Classic, ESPN Deportes (a Spanish language network), ESPNU (a network devoted to college sports), ESPN 3D (a 3D service), and the regionally focused Longhorn Network (a network dedicated to The University of Texas athletics) and SEC Network (focused on Southeastern Athletic Conference sports). ESPN also operates five high-definition television simulcast services, ESPN HD, ESPN2 HD, ESPNEWS HD, ESPNU HD, and ESPN Deportes HD. ESPN programs the sports schedule on the ABC Television Network, which is branded ESPN on ABC. ESPN owns, has equity interests in or has distribution agreements with 47 international sports networks reaching households in more than 200 countries and territories in 16 languages including a live sports network in the UK. ESPN holds a 50% equity interest in ESPN Star Sports, which distributes sports programming throughout most of Asia, and a 30% equity interest in CTV Specialty Television, Inc., which owns The Sports Network, The Sports Network 2, Le Réseau des Sports, ESPN Classic Canada, the NHL Network and Discovery Canada.

In addition to its media outlets, ESPN is well-known for its ownership of the rights to various professional and college sports programming, including, NFL, NBA, the SEC, ACC and Pac 12 college football and basketball conferences, NASCAR and MLB (Major League Baseball).

On the Internet, ESPN owns ESPN.com which delivers comprehensive sports programming, news, information and video each month through its national hub and local sites. ESPN3 is a broadband service available to over 90 million subscribers that delivers thousands of live events. Other sites include WatchESPN, ESPNRadio, ESPNDeportes, ESPNFC, ESPNCrinfo, ESPNScrum, ESPNFI, ScoreCenter, Grantland, and a variety of market-specific sites.

In 2013, ESPN digital properties attracted over 55 million unique visitors, who made over 660 million visits and watched over 5.6 billion minutes, translating to an average of almost 110 minutes per user. In terms of reach, ESPN lead the Sports Category, generating almost 30% of all Sports category usage for the year. ESPN is also the industry leader in terms of mobile Web and apps in terms of total minutes (2.4 billion) and unique visitors (34 million).

With over 55 million unique online visitors, ESPN receives an avalanche of requests for information services every second of every day. ESPN needs to keep track of each visitor's personal interests and profile in order to provide those services. To cope with this highly interactive environment, ESPN adopted an IBM technology called WebSphere® eXtreme Scale. eXtreme Scale is a set of software and hardware tools that rely on distributed cache memory as opposed to hard disk drives to access data. Combining the processing power of 20 or more server computers into a single environment called a "grid," makes it possible for ESPN to process very large volumes of transactions (requests for service) in single millisecond time frames. In addition, the system is highly flexible and can be scaled up or down depending on the demand for services.

video case questions

1. How many requests from users does ESPN receive each second? Do you think this is a consistent pattern or does it have peaks and valleys? When does it peak?
2. Why does ESPN store personal information and preferences on its databases and how does this personal information complicate the ability of ESPN to respond to requests from users? Why can't ESPN just use Web page caching to handle the loads?
3. How much information on users does ESPN store? Why does this pose a challenge for ESPN? Can't they just use a standard 1 terabyte hard drive from a PC? Why can't they use a single PC?
4. What platforms do ESPN customers use when access their Web sites, and how does this further complicate ESPN's processing picture?
5. What are the key components in ESPN's solution? Describe the function of each.
6. Why is scalability so important to ESPN?

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