

Top Dutch Streaming Provider Takes Live Flash® Video To New Heights with Wowza Media Server™ Pro



Overview NetMasters BV is one of the leading hosting and streaming providers in the Netherlands, delivering high-end-Flash services. NetMasters' high-speed, redundant content delivery network provides its customers reliable and scalable performance for critical applications. The company's customers include Amnesty International, FabChannel.com, Keesing/Telegraaf Media Groep, DutchView, Musiqlub, Leidse Onderwijsinstellingen and many other leading firms in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe.

Challenge To support the growing demand for live and on-demand Flash streaming, and enable a rollout of Flash content delivery network (CDN) services, NetMasters needed a cost-effective RTMP streaming server that could scale up effectively, provide rock-solid performance and availability, and that had the flexibility to enable a full suite of services.

Solution NetMasters chose Wowza Media Server Pro Unlimited to power its new Flash CDN, the Flash Video Platform, due to Wowza Pro's cost-effectiveness, scalability, performance, functionality, unmatched live streaming reliability, and also Wowza's superior customer support.

Benefits

- With Wowza Pro NetMasters built a reliable and highly scalable Flash streaming CDN faster and more profitably.
- Wowza Pro's superior live streaming reliability and performance, including the integral Live Stream Repeater capability, lets NetMasters confidently expand their business and deliver unmatched service satisfaction for their customers.
- Wowza Pro is extensible, enabling NetMasters to create new services to support evolving streaming media applications to a high-demanding market.
- Wowza Pro is a multi-platform Java server, permitting NetMasters to deploy it on their choice of high-performance SUN servers.
- The Wowza solution costs 75-80% less than Adobe® FMS2, providing huge savings for NetMasters.

Founded in 2000, NetMasters (also known as FlashHosting) is one of the leading streaming media service providers in the Netherlands. From the beginning the company has set the standard for the delivery of applications and services based on Adobe platforms such as ColdFusion Server and Flash Media Server (FMS), including consumer video services such as gaming, video chat, video recording, video karaoke, and streaming live and on-demand video.

Wowza Media Server Pro was really the only choice for building our Flash Streaming CDN. Wowza Pro's performance is outstanding, and we've never had this level of reliability in live Flash streaming before—it's practically 'set and forget.'

*—Mark de Jong, Sales Manager
NetMasters*

"In 2003 we were the first company in the Netherlands to offer a suite of services based on FMS," says Mark de Jong, sales manager at NetMasters. "And we backed it up with an extensive high-speed network to make sure that our clients received the reliable service they demand."

The company's dedication to customer satisfaction paid off in a big way, and NetMasters built one of the most successful hosting companies in the Netherlands. The company was named to the prestigious Deloitte Tech Fast 50 list two year in a row, boasting 650% growth in 2006 and even a more impressive 778% in 2007.

The Challenge of Live Video Streaming

NetMasters solidified its reputation as a premier service provider in 2004 with on-demand streaming of the European Soccer championships for the Dutch public television station, NOS. While this project was very successful, soccer fans wanted to see the action as it was happening, revealing a growing demand for live streaming. Although the company's on-demand Flash streaming and hosting business was expanding, it feared that the limited live streaming stability and performance of the Flash video streaming solution NetMasters was using, as well as its mounting total cost of ownership, would derail NetMasters' phenomenal growth.

We were spending too much time turning and managing our Flash streaming servers, trying to deliver the level of reliability our customers expect.

*—Mark de Jong, Sales Manager
NetMasters*

“We had invested a great deal of time and money developing a reliable network with the goal of eventually offering a full-featured Flash streaming CDN,” says Mr. de Jong. “But we were worried that we wouldn’t be able to keep up with the demands of live video. Cost-effectiveness, reliability and scalability across the board is a pressing issue, especially for our large commercial customers. We were already spending too much time tuning and managing our Flash streaming servers, trying to deliver the level of reliability our on-demand customers expect.”

Mr. de Jong explains that server stability for live streaming is particularly important. “Even slight interruptions that may be tolerated in an on-demand environment are completely unacceptable to users in a live setting. Viewers tune out and move on, and we lose credibility with our customers.”

The New Kid on the Block

At the beginning of 2007, NetMasters discovered Wowza Media Server Pro, a Java-based RTMP Flash server architected from the ground up for reliability and scalability. “The fact that it was built on Java certainly caught our eye,” says Mr. de Jong. “SUN’s Java support is excellent.”

The company began testing Wowza Media Server Pro, then still in beta, and soon decided that they had a winner. “We were happily surprised by its superior scalability, which is the key to offering our Flash video streaming services to the widest possible range of companies and budgets.” Wowza Pro delivers far superior performance in all measures and specifically in live streaming. The Live Stream Repeater functionality needed to build scalable live streaming services is an integral part of all Wowza Pro editions and was a key part of NetMasters’ expansion plans.

The company deployed Wowza Media Server Pro Unlimited, which allowed them to start customer pilots and demonstrate reliable Flash streaming with a confidence they didn’t have previously. NetMasters also found that Wowza Pro performed exceptionally well for on-demand streaming. “Wowza Pro is very efficient in CPU and memory use. The bottleneck is getting on-demand video bits off the disk fast enough, and that is limited by disk I/O,” notes

Mr. de Jong, “so we paired Wowza Pro with high-performance storage. The result is fantastic.”

Wowza also removed the final obstacle to NetMasters’ CDN plans with its low cost. “In addition to its reliability and performance, the Wowza Media Server’s licensing costs are very attractive. It lets us build out our CDN faster and more profitably.”

Trial By Fire

Wowza Media Server Pro proved itself in the field with a very demanding pilot, delivering live streaming coverage of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) cup final between AZ Alkmaar and AJAX Amsterdam. The pilot demonstrated that Wowza Pro could easily handle the high and rapidly fluctuating demand of soccer fans for a much-anticipated match-up. NetMasters delivered an engaging multi-stream experience where fans could switch in real time between a “director’s cut” view of the game and three additional live camera feeds from different parts of the stadium, enabling them to choose their own, unique perspective on the match. In another pilot, the popular teen educational site www.hoehetmoet.nl found that Wowza Pro easily delivered large numbers of on-demand Flash streams to its customers.

The reliability of Wowza Pro makes its low cost even more compelling. Wowza gives us an important competitive edge.

*—Mark de Jong, Sales Manager
NetMasters*

As a result, the company picked Wowza Pro to be the server of choice for a new suite of Flash CDN services called the Flash Video Platform. Now, many other customers, including interactive advertising agencies, streaming websites, and publishers, are using the Wowza Pro-based Flash Video Platform in production deployments.

“For large-scale Flash streaming services, live streaming in particular, Wowza Pro is the wave of the future,” says Mr. de Jong. “Choosing Wowza Pro was very much a customer-driven decision: its scalability, reliability, high performance, low cost, and the intensive and very pleasant cooperation with Wowza Media Systems were decisive factors.” Mr. de Jong adds that “we’ve never had this level of reliability in live streaming before—it’s practically ‘set and forget.’ That makes its low cost even more compelling, since we don’t have to spend the time of our valuable engineers keeping it running. Wowza gives us an important competitive edge.”



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