



Business challenge

Solitaire Interglobal Ltd. (SIL) has spent decades developing complex predictive models, but the company was ready to launch a new initiative: making storytelling accessible to differently-abled people all over the world.

Transformation

SIL's new offering, Wenebojo, gives people with vision or hearing loss, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), autism or other challenges an opportunity to enjoy stories told in a uniquely engaging and accessible format. The IBM® Cloud™ Hyper Protect Services solution built on the IBM Z® and IBM LinuxONE architecture help make the Wenebojo offering possible by providing a security-rich infrastructure designed for high availability and scalability.



Kat Lind
CEO
Solitaire
Interglobal Ltd.

Results

<2% variation in speed of service

supports high reliability with outstanding customer experience

Zero data protection and privacy breaches

in the first five months after launch, despite over one million attempts

Scales easily and efficiently

to help the company prepare for increased usage

Solitaire Interglobal Ltd.

Stories become accessible with Wenebojo and IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Services

SIL was founded in 1978. Headquartered near Chicago, the organization uses advanced mathematical techniques to analyze data collected from IT and other sources to help companies all over the world make critical business decisions. SIL works with more than 4,800 companies from a wide variety of industries. The organization launched Wenebojo in early 2019.

“This really is, at its core, a social endeavor that will radically change entertainment.”

—Kat Lind, CEO, Solitaire Interglobal Ltd.

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Developing an accessible new experience

Books and movies offer some of life's sweetest moments. Whether it's spending a summer afternoon spellbound by a novel or an evening on the edge of your seat, eating popcorn and cheering on your favorite superhero, stories offer a uniquely human escape.

But what about people who struggle to enjoy books and movies? Those whose eyesight is failing; those who struggle to concentrate on the written word; those who find the motion in movies overwhelming because of PTSD?

The team at SIL wanted to bring storytelling to differently-abled people across the globe. After spending years educating businesses about IT and helping them analyze and mitigate risk, the company launched Wenebojo, an entirely new way to experience stories.

Named for a mythical Native American storyteller from the Ojibwe tribe, Wenebojo is a streaming service that offers purpose-written stories delivered as "bookcasts." Specially trained authors write engaging stories designed to appeal to Wenebojo's audience, and then designers and voiceover artists work together to bring the stories to life. The result is a story that can be

watched, listened to or read without distractive imagery or jarring transitions.

Kat Lind, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at SIL, explains: "It's designed to be something that's immersive without putting the strain on human abilities that sometimes fail or erode." Whether that failure is due to vision or hearing loss, autism, PTSD or dementia, bookcasts can reach people for whom books and movies have lost their appeal. Wenebojo is available on a variety of digital devices, including phones, tablets and TVs.

As the team at SIL began to develop the offering, they identified a few particularly important considerations. Wenebojo's underlying infrastructure would need to be extremely reliable, because any disruption of service would undermine the platform's entire purpose. The solution would also need to protect data and privacy, because bookcasts are made with original content and delivered to private citizens all over the world. And lastly, the Wenebojo platform would have to be highly scalable, able to absorb a growing number of users without interruption.

Choosing the right infrastructure

Before launching Wenebojo, SIL spent many years doing complex predictive performance modeling, and continues to do so today. In fact,

the organization uses its tool, The Global Security Watch, to create more than 250 million performance models per year, generating trillions of data points that center on security and quality of service. So when it came time to choose a platform to support Wenebojo, Lind and her team knew precisely how to approach the question.

She explains: "We ran a huge number of models trying to determine what the impact was and what the risk factors were. The platform that came up at the top by a huge amount, every time, was IBM Z."

Once it had identified the Z platform as its preferred product in terms of security and quality of service, SIL elected to use it as the architecture on which to build its entire cloud solution. The infrastructure also features the LinuxONE platform and three IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Services offerings: the IBM Cloud Hyper Protect DBaaS solution for data confidentiality, IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Virtual Servers technology for access control, and IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Crypto Services software for key management. This combination of products provides SIL with an ideal environment for Wenebojo: the Z architecture and the LinuxONE platform optimized for IBM Cloud are designed for security, reliability and scalability, while the IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Services solution offers a convenient "as-a-service" model.

According to Marisha Jason Kurhara, Director of Analytics at SIL, moving Wenebojo's entire production flow—11 separate websites, 23 databases, 22 million lines of code, and 15 TB of data—to the new environment was surprisingly seamless, and took just over 27 hours. And, she notes, ongoing management of the platform is also straightforward: "One of the biggest benefits is that we don't have to have a data center. We don't have to have the technicians on our payroll to do that. We know that it will be done correctly, and that's a great plus," she says.

A successful beginning

Several months after making Wenebojo publicly available, Lind, Kurhara and the rest of the team at SIL remain very pleased with their choice of infrastructure. First and foremost, they cite the quality of service the IBM Cloud solution provides. For the average person, a quality of service variation of more than 12 percent for a video streaming service becomes noticeably slow or pixelated. For much of Wenebojo's target audience, this threshold is considerably lower. In fact, Lind estimates that anything over 5 percent would be unacceptable. With IBM Cloud, SIL reports service variations of less than 2 percent.

The IBM Cloud Hyper Protect Services solution provides another key benefit to Wenebojo's chosen

infrastructure. In the first five months after the project went live, the platform logged approximately one million attempted attacks. None of them were successful. For Lind, this is particularly comforting. “We’ve been conducting a global security watch for over 22 years now, and we get reports from millions of businesses worldwide on the impact of security breaches. We know how much it costs, what gets lost, how long it takes to recover, et cetera. Being able to keep client data private and the intellectual capital of the writers protected is a very big thing for us.”

Lastly, Lind and her team cite the scalability of the platform as a major benefit of choosing IBM. SIL must be able to scale the system regardless of which side is being stressed: the streaming back end or the customer-facing front end. “If we have a spike in demand, we need to know that there is an automatic way to scale our resources up to handle that demand without reducing the quality of service,” she says.

Wenebojo is rapidly gaining traction in the marketplace as a resource for differently-abled people around the world. Lind and her team are fielding calls from a variety of potential customers, including prison systems, school systems and hospitals. As more and more people learn about Wenebojo’s bookcasts, Lind anticipates rapid growth for the service. Thanks to IBM, she and her team are ready for it. “The modeling we’ve done for Wenebojo shows that if we weren’t running it on IBM Z and LinuxONE, we would need in excess of 500 machines within the next year. We are long-term committed to IBM Z architecture because of the performance and the rock-solid reliability,” she concludes.

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—Kat Lind, CEO, Solitaire Interglobal Ltd.

Solution components

- IBM® Cloud™ Hyper Protect Services
- IBM LinuxONE
- IBM Z®

Take the next step

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