



SkyBet

A Mutual Passion for Innovation and Customer Experience Makes SkyBet and Node4 Perfect Partners



“We could see that Node4 had the facilities we needed, and the manager had a real willingness to be flexible and accommodate our requirements.”

The Customer

When Sky Bet was formed in 2008, the original business Sky bought only had a small share of the market. Incumbent competitors had been around much longer and were in far better positions back then. With Sky's backing, however, it began to leverage the sports focus of television, then technology boomed, and so did the business.

One of Sky Bet's earliest, most shrewd decisions was the early adoption of smart phones and mobile devices. Many competitors didn't adapt quickly enough, but Sky Bet made it possible for customers to bet using easy-to-access technology, and it triggered a period of extremely rapid growth. This is something the business has sustained through dedication to innovation and customer experience, making them one of the top betting companies in the UK.

'A large part of our success is our culture,' said Jag Bains, Head of Architecture - Infrastructure and Security. 'We are completely

customer obsessed; always thinking about what we can do to make the customer experience better. We realised early on that being masters of our own product was key to being able to move quickly regarding what the market was looking for.'

A big perspective change happened around 2010 when the business decided to move away from using third parties at their front end, and this meant building an effective and passionate development team, who could innovate quickly to suit customers needs.

Agile software was a key part of this and the business is now a thriving software development business. Sky Bet has always had a real focus on collaboration and this really helped. No one feels limited by their own role. Each employee knows that they are part of the bigger picture and if they have something to say to support another job function they are encouraged to say so and help their fellow team mates.

'In such a competitive market place, there is limited scope to be competitive simply using odds. We do have some great promotions but what really sets us apart and differentiates us is customer service and customer experience,' Jag said.

'We achieve this through two main focuses. The first is reliability. It's imperative that we are always online and accessible but specifically during big games or sporting events. If customers have an experience that lets them down they may not come back, so we make sure that simply doesn't happen. Our calendar is built around large scale events such as the Grand National and sporting activities on Boxing Day.

Both are critical in terms of growth, and business on these days allows us to plan for the following year.'

The second focus is providing cool, innovative options like 'Cash Out' which allows customers to cash out early during a sporting event if it seems like a sensible option. Another is 'Request-a-Bet' in which customers can create their own bet, which can be communicated on Twitter so that others can get involved. It's interactive, but much of it is also automated.

The Challenge

Originally the business used two data centres, both located offshore. This was logistically and technically difficult. Changing a piece of equipment would typically involve a 24hr turnaround and it was also difficult to keep an eye on things and audit what existed. Connectivity was limited regarding options and bandwidth and integrating with third parties was proving to be extremely difficult.

This all led to the team starting to look for a hosting provider in Yorkshire. There was a surprisingly long list, and they visited several who fitted their requirements, but were particularly impressed by the Node4 Leeds facility.

'It was spotless and so clearly well-organised and maintained,' Jag said. 'We could see that they had the facilities we needed, and the manager had a real willingness to be flexible and accommodate our requirements. We issued an RFP and Node4 sent back by far the most detailed and comprehensive report which satisfied all our key requirements. It really stood out. They were the obvious choice.'

The Solution

Node4 provides Sky Bet with a hosting pod; caged for compliance, and allows personal access and control, in addition to Sky Bet's own CCTV solution focussed on the cage. It also provides a large and varied connectivity solution. This includes bespoke Tier 1 IP transit services, dark fibre (used for interconnects between the data centre, Sky Bet locations and third parties) and IP connectivity as a managed service. They also use connectivity to support the production platform and office functions like flexible working.



The Feedback

'A lot of what we wanted was something new that hadn't been asked for before. Node4 were unfailing in their adaptability, flexibility and ability to deliver the tight timeframes we proposed,' said James Pecksen, Head of Programme and Commercial.

Jag added: 'They were excellent from contact to delivery. The team continually impressed us, from initial engagement in terms of response to our RFP, to the whole process of developing our requirements (many of which weren't standard). They were responsive and creative to meet our needs and it was a great experience from our perspective. They provide the same service that larger companies provide but in a much more dynamic way. Maintaining that model and working closely with us is what won the business in the first place and we've built that relationship over 24 months.'

'The ongoing service has also been great,' James said. *'Even our most recent network delivery was not just on time, but early. We see the partnership progressing and us maintaining strong links with Node4. They help us to make tactical changes that keep us at the top of our game and they deliver new things that don't necessarily already exist for us at pace.'*

Key Outcomes:

- SkyBet's own private caged area in Node4 DC
- Huge connectivity footprint
- Locations connected through Tier1 transit services
- Dark fibre interconnects
- Local to their HQ