



The VAR at Whitney Houston's Funeral

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Despite her troubles, disappointments and shortcomings, Whitney Houston never lost the adoration and support of her fans. And no place were her fans more loyal and grieving than among the parishioners of her childhood congregation, the New Hope Church in Newark.

New Hope was the natural choice for the musical superstar's funeral. While several locations were considered for the final rites, New Hope was the place where she grew up, got her musical start in the choir and her family still prayed.

Despite giving birth to Houston's musical career, New Hope is a small and modest church. It doesn't have a huge congregation or resources, but it did have the support of a solution provider that understood how to manage what could have been an overtaxing, if not crushing, demand on the church's Web and IT resources.

Within hours of being notified of Houston's funeral arrangements, New Jersey-based solution provider PowerSolution sprang into action, ensuring the New Hope Church's IT and Web services were prepared for the onslaught of grieving fans.

"Essentially it was relatively simple, most of all the requirements revolved around the Web site, providing additional processing and bandwidth, working with agents for review of material to post and timing of when to post. New Hope has complete control of their site via our CMS system, but of course due to the obvious, we were tasked with [supporting content]," PowerSolution CEO David Dadian told Channelnomics.

Dadian is being somewhat modest. While bandwidth management and server redundancy is somewhat routine in provisioning, it was the added pressure of ensuring the systems remain operational under a severely higher-than-normal traffic load and the need to support one-time service requests.

For instance, the New Hope could never accommodate the throng of mourners wanting to pay their last respects to Houston. The church limited the proceeding to family members and invited guests only. To provide the crowds gathering outside the church and the millions of fans at home

a glimpse into the funeral, PowerSolution worked with the Associated Press to set up an online video feed.

Providing streaming video was the trickiest part of the operation, Dadian explains. Because of copyright issues and technical limitations, they couldn't establish an embedded video feed from the AP cameras. Instead, they coordinated the embedding of a link on the church site that opened a video player.

Through the days leading up to the Houston funeral and the final proceedings, Dadian and the PowerSolution team worked to throttle capacity and support to meet New Hope's bandwidth and resource needs.

"The site basically saw a 13,000 percent increase at peak. In roughly four days there were just over 60,000 visits, averaging 2 minutes in duration with 30,000 visits on Saturday [Feb. 18, the day of the funeral]," Dadian said. "Our cloud hosting environment is completely scalable, which made it a cinch to meet the capacity needs as New Hope's site was hammered for requests."

Following the Houston services, traffic began to subside to a new normal. Traffic loads remain higher due to the number of link backs. As traffic tapers off, PowerSolution is going through the process of throttling back capacity.

The Houston funeral proceedings at the New Hope Church is a tremendous example of how even a small organization can experience extreme demands on its IT resources. Moreover, PowerSolution's ongoing service and special support shows how solution providers can effectively manage the variable needs of customers on permanent and temporary basis.

What made the coordination of the special requests and added capacity possible, though, is open communication and pre-established relations. In the three years PowerSolution had worked with New Hope, it continually informed church leaders of its capacities and capabilities, even when it didn't appear as though the church was a growth account. When the unexpected surge did come, the church knew it could turn to its solution provider for support. In that regard, PowerSolution shined even under the pale of a superstar's passing.