



INVITE MEDIA NETEZZA IN ACTION

From Chaos to Targeting Nirvana

Marketers looking for the Next Big Thing in 2007 did not expect to find it at the University of Pennsylvania. But that, in fact, is where advertising and technology company Invite Media was created by Nat Turner, Zachary Weinberg, Scott Becker and Michael Provenzano. Their product, Bid Manager, was the first self-service, universal buying platform for display media. “We were the first DSP (demand side platform),” said Scott. “We called it a ‘universal buying platform’ before the term DSP was coined.”

Their timing was right. Advertisers, eager to reach people most likely to buy, were moving away from random appearances in ad networks to more targeted placements. But they had to cope with a growing number of networks and a virtual Tower of Babel.

Bid Manager was designed to streamline this process. It works like an E*TRADE of advertising. Users can bid in all networks based on performance and innumerable demographic attributes. “We’re an ad machine,” Scott said. “We automate what used to take teams of people to make work.”

This is based on Bid Manager’s ability to crunch reams of data, spit out detailed reports in real time and provide a seamless buying experience. Here are a few of the benefits of the Bid Manager platform:

- Analytics run in near real time.
- The user interface is extremely quick and easy to use.
- The platform has “phenomenal reporting, with incredible drill-downs and complete transparency into where ads are being served,” as Scott said.
- Advertisers can set up, launch, and make changes to campaigns on the fly.

The Winning Technology

It was one thing to create mathematical algorithms to support the concept of a universal buying platform. It was another to find the database technology required to support its ongoing use and scalability. As a startup in a winner-take-all space, Invite Media had to get out there first. But how? “We could have built something, but it would have taken years,” Scott said. “Obviously, it makes sense to outsource data management.”

This was no small challenge. At first, Invite Media used analytic platforms from Postgres and Hadoop. “But that became problematic,” Scott continued. “The challenge with Postgres and Hadoop is that you can’t achieve scale without a significant engineering investment.”

invite**media**®

Company Profile:

- Invite Media: Start-up company that created the world’s first demand side platform (DSP)
- Bid Manager: Self-service DSP that allows users to buy from multiple ad exchanges in real time, through a high performance, easy to use interface

Business Challenge:

- Needed rapid time-to-market and low TCO to succeed as a start-up in the tech space
- Advertisers sought targeted, data-driven ad placements across all networks
- Had to facilitate queries and targeting using multiple data sources, while offering data to advertisers in a user-friendly tool

Application:

- Bid Manager DSP powered by Netezza data warehouse appliance in the cloud, hosted by AppNexus

Solution Benefits:

- Rapid time-to-market – deployment of data warehouse in the cloud within 2 weeks
- ROI within 6 months
- Clients can query over 20 data sources to evaluate and optimize ad campaigns in near real time
- Ease of administration – maintenance requires 20% of an engineer’s time

“As a startup, if you are not constantly in a time crunch, you don’t survive. Rapid time-to-market was central to our strategy, and Netezza’s simple approach to delivering cost-effective high-performance data analysis enabled us to achieve that goal.”

Scott Becker
Co-Founder
Product
Invite Media

“Netezza slaughtered the competition on performance. And we don’t have to do any database optimization with Netezza.”

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“You need speed. Humans interact with our user interface, and they don’t want to wait for information.”

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The firm sought a different solution. Its strategic objectives:

- Better (and faster) campaign performance
- Access to more data providers for use by clients in targeting their campaigns
- Ease of use: the ability to go directly from reporting to action

Invite Media evaluated Aster Data, Bizgres, Greenplum, Netezza and Teradata. The name that rose to the top was the one suggested by Brian O’Kelley, CEO of the ad exchange AppNexus. It was Netezza. “Netezza slaughtered the competition on performance. Aster Data, Bizgres and Greenplum couldn’t get their stuff to perform. Teradata came closer in performance but was way above our price range and is much more focused on doing business with huge companies,” commented Scott. “And we don’t have to do any database optimization with Netezza.”

He went on, “We saw the performance benchmarks, so even if Teradata were in the ballpark on price, we wouldn’t have chosen them.” In contrast, “Netezza offered a good price point and great benchmarks.”

Invite Media decided to move forward with Netezza, through the AppNexus cloud offering. “We wanted to distribute data over multiple boxes on commodity hardware. Netezza was the easiest way to come up with a distributed system on our own,” Scott said. And as a small company needing to quickly and affordably scale up and down its data warehouse, the cloud offering provided by AppNexus was the perfect solution for Invite Media.

Training? “Netezza offered training, but we didn’t need it. We just read the manual.” And how long did it take to deploy? Two weeks.

The Payoff

Invite Media’s data warehouse platform was a huge accelerator. Bid Manager is a market leader in the DSP space today, and Scott credits Netezza with part of the company’s success.

One benefit Invite Media’s analytic platform delivers to users is that they can query multiple variables, everything from demographics like age and gender, to probability to buy. Not every client wants 10 or 20 variables today — most choose one or two, like site and frequency. “But we needed to have them ready to go for future demand,” Scott said. “Campaign performance is all about micro segments. And Netezza has been instrumental in offering our clients that extreme level of campaign targeting precision.”

Invite Media absorbs online data from over 20 providers today, resulting in fine-grained segmentation and greater targeting precision, and it makes sense of all this with algorithms powered by Netezza. “The more variables you use, the more opportunities you have to find people who are right for your product,” Scott explained. “Humans can’t physically comprehend that many variables, so you have to bring in algorithms.”

Invite Media’s clients use the Bid Manager system today for many functions including:

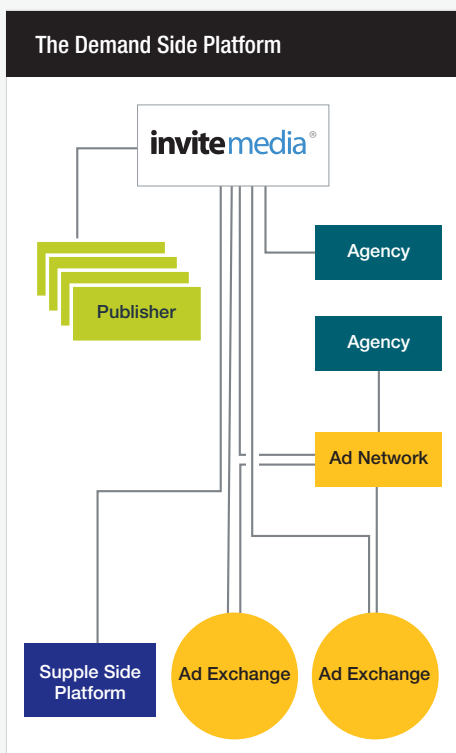
- To bid in real time and optimize campaigns by “turning off what isn’t working”
- To see where ads have appeared in the last 90 days across millions of Web sites
- To report on conveniently grouped attributes

“Grouping these sites by frequency and recency would be a nightmare without Netezza,” Scott said.

Yet another benefit is speed. Invite Media instantly answers queries. Users no longer have to worry about how long it will take: They can focus on marketing issues like the cost of a data set and how to make it work. As Scott said, there’s “so much value in efficiency.” Finally, reports arrive when they should. “We have hundreds of data reports that advertisers need in the morning so they can make decisions. That’s where you need performance.”

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But Invite Media has not abandoned its incumbent technologies for Netezza. Bid Manager relies on Hadoop for ETL (extract, transfer and load), and maintains a small Postgres database for ad book data. But all data and analytics are run on Netezza.

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Some of the benefits of Netezza’s data warehouse appliance went right to the bottom line at Invite Media. Netezza allows:

- Lower TCO (total cost of ownership).
- Fast return on investment— Invite Media achieved ROI within six months. “And now, at scale, we realize ROI every month,” Scott said.
- Ease of maintenance — it takes 20% of an engineer’s time to maintain the Netezza system.


Summing up, Scott lists the overall benefits Invite Media has seen with Netezza as “performance, low cost, low maintenance,” and adds: “As a startup, if you are not constantly in a time crunch, you don’t survive. Rapid time-to-market was central to our strategy, and Netezza’s simple approach to delivering cost-effective high-performance data analysis enabled us to achieve that goal.”

Nothing is Impossible

Confusion still exists as to what makes a DSP. Invite Media co-founder Nat Turner recently came up with a DSP credo. It says, in part, that:

- The DSP should be neutral. It should have “zero allegiances to any publishers, exchanges, data providers or other vendors.”
- The DSP must provide a fully self-service interface. Clients should be able to have complete control via the interface and build an expertise around its use.”
- The technology should not require any manual work behind the scene to activate or “set live” a change or a campaign.

Having accomplished that, Invite Media is looking for “new ways to analyze the exchange eco system,” Scott noted. “We’re doing some interesting stuff around ‘smart bidding,’ optimizing our buying decisions to acquire more relevant inventory at lower prices by incorporating more variables into our decision analysis.”

He went on, “Nothing’s impossible, but Netezza has allowed us to do things that would otherwise take us too long to consider. We can dream up some crazy feature, and Netezza can handle it—in two seconds.” 



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About Netezza

Netezza (NYSE: NZ) is the global leader in data warehouse and analytic appliances that dramatically simplify high-performance analytics across an extended enterprise. Netezza's technology enables organizations to process enormous amounts of captured data at exceptional speed, providing a significant competitive and operational advantage in today's data-intensive industries including digital media, energy, financial services, government, health and life sciences, retail and telecommunications. Netezza is headquartered in Marlborough, Massachusetts and has offices in North America, Europe and the Asia Pacific region. **For more information about Netezza, please visit www.netezza.com.**