How a lower configuration server increased the uncertainty for an assessment program of 8,000 test takers

A blue chip client wanted to conduct a recruitment drive and test and assess 8,000+ candidates. In addition, the client wanted to have the testing system branded for them.

A white labeled assessment center was commissioned for the client, with all premium features, including customized user journeys and reporting tools. However, the client chose to save on cost and proceed with a lower server configuration. This meant that the client would be sharing the server with several other clients that HireLabs was servicing at that time.

When the client's assessment drive started, the candidates were logging on from their homes, as well as from their university computer labs. Within a few hours as the volume of test takers increased, it started affecting the performance of the server. To make matters worse, some of the PCs (especially in the universities) accessing the testing environment were infected with viruses, and as a result, DDOS attacks (Distributed Denial of Service) were observed. Some attacks were so severe that over 16,000 hits per second were being observed.

The client asked for an immediate upgrade, however this would delay the testing and would require several days of redevelopment and then reconfiguration onto the new server. The HireLabs team came up with a solution to stage the testing into multiple phases. This strategy decreased the load on the existing server, and allowed for a less problematic execution.

The HireLabs team also identified that the test takers were coming from several IPs that were already black listed, but were still accessing the server (mostly from universities). HireLabs made a conscious effort to block these IPs from accessing the servers (see Appendix).

The client asked the HireLabs team also put in place a premium service that would act as a customer support desk. Through this premium service, the test takers could call a phone number and receive guidance from the HireLabs team on what to do next.

As a result of the proactive steps taken by the HireLabs team, the client's recruitment drive reached its completion. The program was initially supposed to be completed within 5 days, but took 15 days to reach the desired objective.

Challenges
- The client opted for a cost reduction strategy and selected a basic server configuration to host its assessment platform for mass-testing
- Managing uncertainty of server performance when working on a lower configuration server

Solution
- Manage server performance through load balancing
- Scale-back testing so that server capability can cope with volume

Approach
- Work with the client to extend the testing dates and reduce the load on the server
- Block IPs that were responsible for DDOS attacks
- Leveraging HireLabs' customer support desk to provide further assistance to test takers

Outcome
- Since the Talent Assessment Platform is now an integral part of the organization, a higher configuration server is now being commissioned
- The new server will have managed backup services
- The new server will have managed load balancing to address issues related to testing

IP	IP Source	IP Status	Reference link of the IPs
115.186.105.172	Worldcall, Blacklisted on Web	Not Blocked	
111.68.96.226	NUST, ISL, Blacklisted on Cloud	Blocked by HireLabs	http://www.ip-finder.me/111.68.96.226/
111.68.111.154	IBA, ISL, Blacklisted on Web	Blocked by HireLabs	http://anti-hacker-alliance.com/index.php?ip=111.68.111.154
111.68.101.165	NUST, ISL	Blocked by HireLabs	https://www.spamhaus.org/query/ip/111.68.101.165
111.68.111.158	IBA, ISL	Blocked by HireLabs	http://anti-hacker-alliance.com/index.php?ip=111.68.111.158&searching=yes
221.120.220.11	LUMS, LHR, PTCL, Blacklisted on Web	On going monitoring	http://addgadgets.com/ip_blacklist/index.php?ipaddr=221.120.220.11

NUST = National University of Science and Technology

ISL = Islamabad

IBA = institute of Business administration

LUMS = Lahore University of Management Sciences

LHR = Lahore

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