



CASE STUDY: TheLadders

EFFICIENTLY DELIVERING MILLIONS OF CLOSELY-TARGETED EMAILS EVERY MORNING

TheLadders.com is the premier job search site for \$100K+ jobs. With over 4 million members, the company relies on inexpensive, targeted, and scalable email marketing to promote its message. An email solution from Thumbtack Technology has enabled TheLadders to vastly expand its marketing campaigns and closely target its huge user base.

THE CHALLENGE

TheLadders is one of the most innovative companies in New York, delivering unique services for its clients and growing dramatically year over year. As membership grew, TheLadders saw opportunity in providing ever more personalized and targeted content to a broader audience. It was also vital that every customer get up to date job search results and other personalized information, something an ASP could not offer.

The company had been using a shrink-wrapped email marketing solution that was neither scalable enough to meet their high volumes nor flexible enough to tailor messages the way they needed. Outside email services were also unable to provide required customization and were not cost-effective for the huge customer base.

THELADDERS NEEDED AN ENHANCED EMAIL MARKETING PLATFORM THAT COULD:

- Deliver highly customized emails in huge volumes
- Reach members when they first open their mail in the morning (i.e. between 9:00-10:00am)
- Integrate seamlessly into the technical infrastructure, leveraging the same skill sets used by in-house developers
- Enable marketing experiments that complement and enhance current business intelligence activities.

THUMBTRACK SOLUTION

Thumbtack Technology built a distributed email assembly using its proprietary Thumbtack Scalable Software Architecture, an approach for building distributed systems that scale effortlessly, handle server failure gracefully, and recover automatically. The system combines open source software with Thumbtack engineering to exceed performance and customizability goals and open up many new email marketing possibilities.

DESIGN GOALS

- The system should scale automatically when new servers are added to keep up with user demand
- If a server fails, it should not impact message delivery, with automatic recovery transparent to users
- Marketing staff should be able to specify precisely who should receive what messages and how content should look for each customer

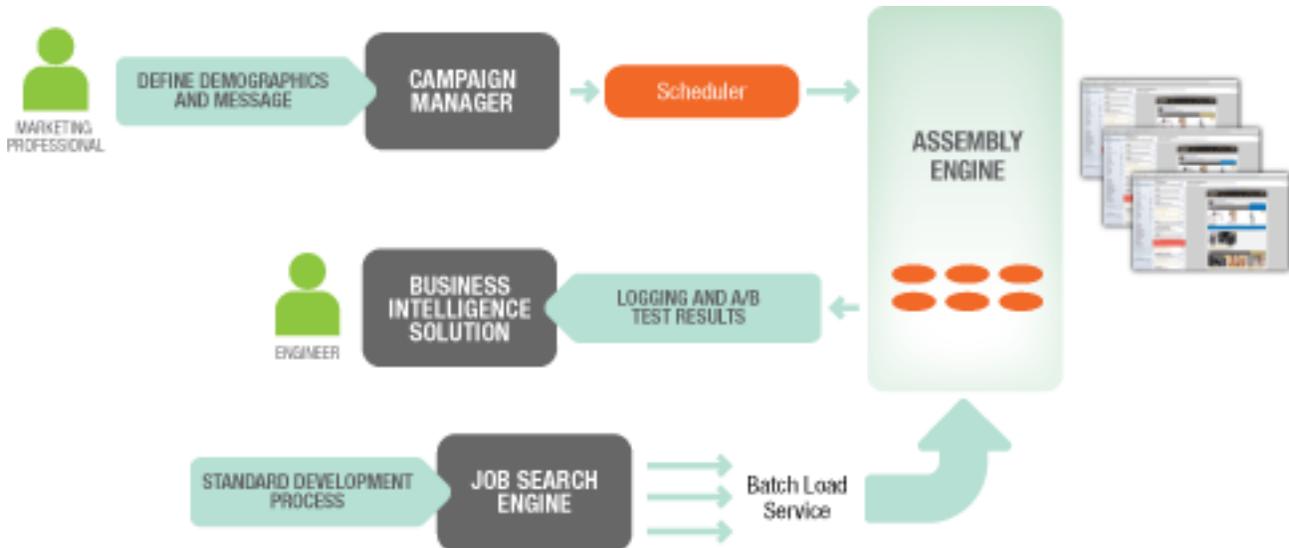
"TheLadders needed a flexible mailing system where we could control every aspect of our message but still reach out to our core customer base. Thumbtack's solution not only met our needs, it brought us significant savings compared to any other service we've found.

– Ofir Shalom
VP Software Development, TheLadders.com



ASSEMBLY ENGINE

A key requirement was the ability to scale easily to handle TheLadders' rapidly expanding customer base. Using the Thumbtack Scalable Software Architecture, TheLadders can add capacity simply by provisioning a new server rather than costly and complex software upgrades. The assembly engine distributes the application across available servers, creating multiple instances running in parallel to support extremely high volumes of data and users while integrating with TheLadders' core services.



Built for speed: The email solution automatically scales across available servers while integrating with marketing programs and analytics

- **Fast, fast, fast:** Millions of emails are delivered to customers each morning on tight deadlines.
- Annual savings of between \$50,000 to \$150,000 when compared to a hosted solution.
- Finely-tuned, closely-targeted emails mean higher conversion rates.
- Cloud-ready architecture allows capacity to be extended at minimal cost.
- Email metrics integrate with marketing campaigns and website analytics
- 99.999% uptime. Redundant architecture ensures messages are delivered even after network failures.

POWER FOR BUSINESS USERS

To enable TheLadders to get greater returns from its marketing programs, Thumbtack created a rich user interface for designing, scheduling, and managing campaigns. Marketers can configure campaigns and segments to fit their needs, and take advantage of a full editorial workflow that streamlines content creation, editing, and approval before anything goes out the door. All content is rendered using the native JSP technology used by TheLadders, enabling libraries developed for the web site to be reused in email campaigns.

The system is integrated into TheLadders' business intelligence platform, enabling marketing experiments across different media. For example, an A/B test can be set up where different segments of a campaign get different email messages in different percentages, and their open and clickthrough rates can be compared to similar tests and conversion rates on a web site. This ability to combine email metrics with website analytics helps the business intelligence team deliver better returns from their marketing programs.

THE RESULTS

The system was launched in early 2008 and still handles virtually all of TheLadders email communications. Key benefits include:

- Ten-fold performance improvement over the prior system, enabling TheLadders to meet email delivery requirements for large audiences. (Each server node can deliver 250K – 750K emails at peak capacity.)
- New segmentation strategies, including time-zone segmentation integrated with the scheduler, to reach the right users at the right time
- Marketing and business analysis teams can experiment, allowing more finely-tuned emails and higher conversion rates.
- Customizable failover enables 24x7 uptime, even during system outages
- European business units have migrated their email systems to standardize on the Thumbtack platform, reducing operating costs.

SCALABILITY OR INTEGRATION CHALLENGES? CALL US!

Thumbtack Technology specializes in building and integrating scalable applications and systems for Fortune 500 companies and startups. We're dedicated to solving complex problems at a reasonable price to improve the business processes of our clients. Let's talk about how you can meet your scalability and integration challenges — quickly, competently, and efficiently.