

Virtual sports provider enters Canadian market with resilience backed by 11:11 Systems

Inspired Entertainment is a business-to-business provider of online gaming solutions. The company is recognized as a premier provider of virtual sports—such as horse and car racing and sports games—available as scheduled events as well as on-demand. Inspired serves the UK and European markets from data centers in Gibraltar, and recently built infrastructure in New Jersey to serve the U.S. market.

When Inspired planned its entry into the Canadian market, management sought an established service provider with in-country data centers and proven disaster recovery capabilities. Today, 11:11 Systems, formerly Sungard Availability Services, hosts the company's primary and DR infrastructure from two [11:11] data centers near Toronto to assure a quality experience for Inspired's customers across Canada—including its recent rollout to Loto-Québec.

Client Profile

Inspired offers an expanding portfolio of content, technology, hardware, and services for regulated gaming, betting, lottery, and leisure operators across retail and mobile channels around the world. Its gaming, virtual sports, interactive, and leisure products create new opportunities for operators to grow their revenue.

The company operates in 35 jurisdictions worldwide, supplying gaming systems with associated terminals and content for more than 58,000 gaming machines located in betting shops, pubs, gaming halls and other route operations; virtual sports products through more than 44,000 retail channels; digital games for 100+ websites; and a variety of amusement entertainment solutions with an installed base of more than 19,000 devices.

Inspired was honored with its selection to build a virtual representation of the 2019 Grand National horse race. The Grand National, with history going back to 1839, is a prominent event in British culture and attracts an audience of more than 500 million viewers worldwide. The virtual Grand National, produced by Inspired in collaboration with Channel 4 in the UK, was televised the day before the real Grand National. View the virtual 2019 Grand National [video here](#).

CHALLENGES

- Meeting regulations in a new market
- Minimizing risks and costs

SOLUTIONS

- 11:11 Private Cloud
- 11:11 Managed Recovery

BENEFITS

- Complete IT and recovery environment in new market
- Infrastructure hosting and DRaaS avert capital investment and create predictable operational expense
- 11:11 support helps ensure timely launch of new gaming services

INSPIRED CASE STUDY

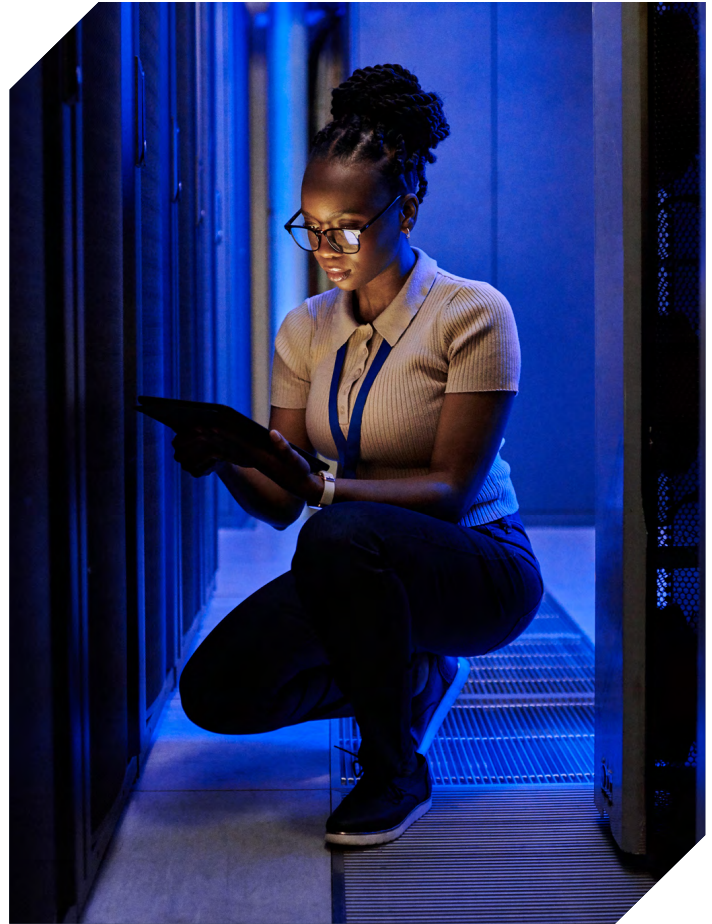
Challenges

Entering a new market while minimizing risk

As one of the gaming industry's leading suppliers of virtual sports, Inspired Entertainment has a wealth of experience in developing games and delivering them to global customers. The company has built an enviable catalog of innovative games and grown its business through a thoughtful country-by-country expansion. It has developed best practices to manage its risks and costs, traditionally relying on its own IT infrastructure as the platform for service delivery.

"We have a very strong technical team and generally build and run our own infrastructure within colocation data centers," says Tariq Tufail, Chief Technology Officer at Inspired Entertainment. "We manage it end-to-end, including the physical hardware, the virtualization layer, and the network. We're a 24x7x365 operation and our team is on call to monitor all of our environments to ensure our service meets the high expectations of stakeholders."

When Inspired planned its entry into the Canadian market, the company faced some special challenges. Canadian gaming regulators require that all computing infrastructure and data reside in-country, and gaming companies are required to have a permanently established business entity before building a data center.



"It's time-tested, we know the capabilities of the team we're dealing with, and our OPEX spending is consistent. I would go to [11:11] to do a rinse and repeat of the same solution we've deployed in Canada."

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Director of IT Operations,
Inspired Entertainment

Inspired's Director of IT Operations, James Wilson, led a review of potential service providers that could meet the requirements of the regulators, as well as Inspired's own criteria for technical capabilities and pricing. The search ultimately focused on [11:11], which had several data centers near Toronto backed with proven expertise in managing critical infrastructure and recovery.

Following reviews of [11:11] facilities and methodologies, in addition to extensive technical discussions and negotiations, Inspired signed a three-year agreement with [11:11] for a complete IT and recovery environment to support its entry into the Canadian gaming market.

Inspired worked with [11:11] to develop a recovery strategy that met both its business requirements and budget constraints. "As we worked to optimize the cost of the design, we realized we couldn't have every single server up and running in DR because of the expense associated with doing that," says Wilson. "We streamlined the approach to focus on our top priority: having real-time replication of our database in the DR environment. For our application servers, our requirement is to have the DR environment replicate the current or most-recent images."

INSPIRED CASE STUDY

Listening is key to best-fit approach

The agreement with [11:11] includes a dedicated hosting environment to support Inspired's primary production infrastructure in the [11:11] Mississauga, Ontario data center. The environment can accommodate up to 150 virtualized servers running Windows or Linux, plus significant storage capacity.

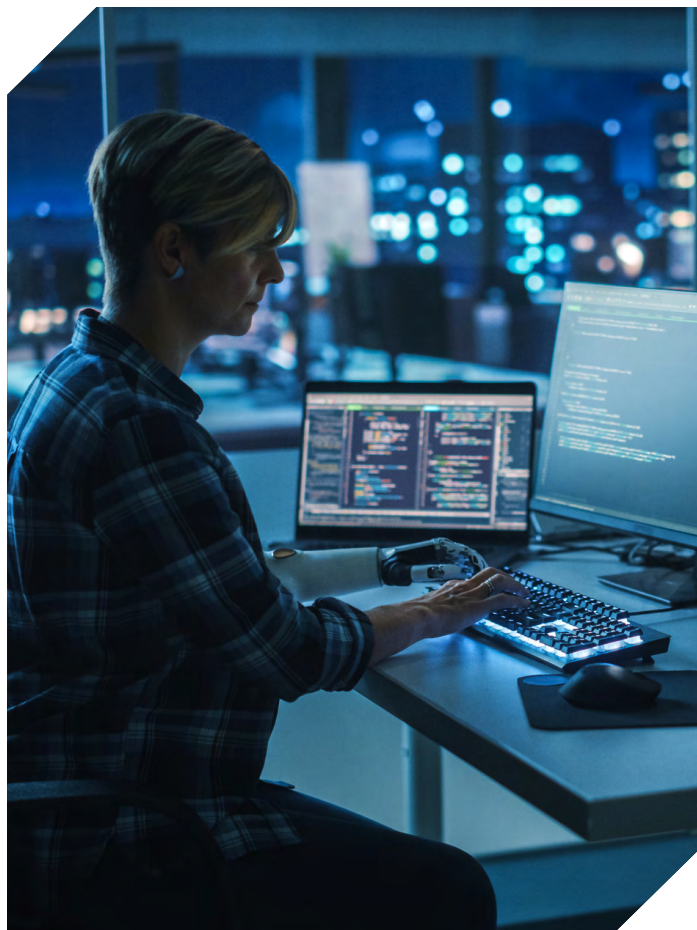
Data held in Microsoft SQL Server production databases is replicated to [11:11 Systems] using VMware Site Recovery Manager (SRM) to manage failover and recovery and to meet its commitment for a 2-hour RTO and 30-minute RPO.

"We're not used to buying services," says Wilson. "We are used to having access to the physical hardware — to do what we need to do, whenever we need to do it. So, we initially had some concerns about being one step removed from it. But the [11:11] team has been very responsive to our requirements, willing to jump in when we have an urgent request and collaborate with us on broader issues."

"It feels more like a partnership with the [11:11] team rather than a service that we bought from them," he adds.

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Meeting the requirements of regulators and auditors

[11:11 Systems] has many customers in regulated industries and supports them when they face audits and inspections for industry and governmental certifications. For Inspired, regulators conduct inspections of the overall IT infrastructure to understand the protections in place to assure resiliency and security, as well as gaming-specific requirements.

"We can take a regulator into the [11:11 Systems] data center and show them the physical hardware for the gaming servers," says Craig Banthorpe, IT Project Manager at Inspired Entertainment. "That's not something a public cloud provider can do — they can't point a regulator to the device that generates the numbers, and that's the most important part of the gaming system."

Canadian regulators mandate that third-party laboratories review all gaming source code. "Over the 12 months that we've been working with [11:11], the first customers have been the regulators and auditors who issue the certificates that would later be accepted by Loto-Québec," says Banthorpe.

Releasing gaming products to highly regulated markets is a long and demanding process. With perseverance and help from the [11:11] team, Inspired has achieved its initial milestones and is now live with Loto-Québec. "We've had the first few games live for several months, and recently went live with some scheduled virtual games," explains Banthorpe. "We are now working through the certification process with British Columbia."



The Results

"The regulatory situation in Canada led us toward this hosted solution, prompting us to look beyond our traditional self-managed IT," says Wilson. "Based on this experience with [11:11] it's no longer something that we would put at option #3 — it is firmly something we would consider as the primary option when tasked with providing this type of system anywhere around the globe. It's time-tested, we know the capabilities of the team we're dealing with, and our OPEX spending is consistent. I would go to [11:11] to do a rinse and repeat of the same solution we've deployed in Canada."

"We have a resilient infrastructure in place and are now living with a service in a new country," added Tariq Tufail, Chief Technology Officer at Inspired Entertainment. "It's the first time we've taken infrastructure as a service, and I think we are better for it. It's given us the confidence to decide quicker when we're faced with the same challenge of balancing a large capital outlay versus trusting a third party to provide us with that service."

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CLOUD



CONNECTIVITY



SECURITY

11:11
SYSTEMS