Rackspace HOSTING

empireavenue

EMPIRE AVENUE POWERS ITS SOCIAL MEDIA EXCHANGE ON THE RACKSPACE® CLOUD

The fast-growing social media company uses Rackspace® Cloud Servers™ for just about everything

THE COMPANY

Empire Avenue is a social website that helps users meet other people and measure their social media value. The site is part game, part application: a virtual exchange comprised of people and companies, billed as "The Social Media Exchange."

Founded in late 2009 and launched publicly in mid-2010, the company has five full-time employees, and will be hiring more soon. The site has quickly grown to handle between 250,000 and 500,000 weekly transactions (any buy or sell through Empire Avenue's API), finding popularity among corporate brands, social media fans, and teachers of social media techniques alike. The site also rewards good behavior and good content. "It's not just how influential you are, but how engaged you are with your audience," explains Tom Ohle, VP of Marketing and Media Relations at Empire Avenue.

Connection is paramount: "It's about the idea of using value to find great people, and then connecting them on different social networks," says Duleepa "Dups"

Wijayawardhana, CEO and co-founder of Empire Avenue.

A PLATFORM BUILT ON THE RACKSPACE CLOUD

There were a number of reasons why Empire Avenue chose Rackspace, says Ohle. "It was a very deliberate choice. A pile of colleagues recommended you guys. But more than that, the reasons were your ability for us to scale servers."

"Through Rackspace, we're able to control our servers to a great extent," says Wijay-awardhana. "We built our own platform, and we wanted to be able to run the whole thing on one server at the start. Obviously as we've grown that's no longer possible, but the system was developed to scale. In using the Rackspace Cloud, we were able to fine-tune a lot of what we do and what we might have to do. Having developed our own platform, we were able to use the Rackspace Cloud to figure out our sharding methodology beforehand."

"We do all the kind of things you can do on other cloud providers," he says. "But if we

were hosted elsewhere, we'd be spending a lot more money. For us, Rackspace was the most affordable, most reliable option."

"Since our needs varied from running web servers to running heavy CPU and spindle-intensive computational analysis to running transactional databases to handle a full economy, we needed pricing that made sense, and reliability and support that we could count on," says Wijayaward-hana. "We liked the startup mentality that Rackspace has as well as the potential for future growth using hybrid solutions that

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> **Dups Wijayawardhana,**
> CEO and co-founder, Empire Avenue

> "By using the Rackspace Cloud we are able to fine tune a lot of what we do, and our Cloud Servers do everything you can imagine."

Dups Wijayawardhana,
CEO and co-founder, Empire Avenue

Rackspace offered. As we have grown, we have moved to a hybrid configuration of both Cloud and Dedicated servers."

CLOUD SERVERS RUNNING "EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE"

Empire Avenue currently uses more than 20 Cloud Servers, and with the company's rapid growth, they are adding another server every few days. They put those Cloud Servers to work on a wide range of tasks. "They do everything you can imagine," says Wijayawardhana. "We use Cloud Servers for our staging environment. We also have a couple that run Sphinx search servers, and one or two servers that run flat out—fetching everything that people say on Twitter, running analysis on Facebook, etc."

Because of their ambitious social media goals, Empire Avenue needs a lot of computing power: the company is using four or five Cloud Servers for databases. Initially, they were able to host the entire site on one 16 GB Cloud DB Server with a few web servers. While that changed as the site grew, it gave the team confidence and cost savings to spend on building out the platform. "We're using every trick in the budget to keep our footprint as small as possible so that no matter the scale, we use minimal computing power," says Wijayawardhana.

"At this point our architecture is a truly hybrid collection of open-source technologies and we're continually evaluating new technologies and new ideas that companies are using to scale at a low cost," says Wijayawardhana. "We don't mind trying something new—it just means spinning up some virtual servers and testing out some of our traffic on it."

They also use Jungle Disk® so that they can have private directories. "That Jungle Disk is part of Rackspace is great—it means that all of our stuff is in the same place," Wijayawardhana. "That's music to my ears."

Rackspace's support has also been a boon for the company. "Whenever we have needed them, Rackspace has always been really responsive," says Wijayawardhana.

Empire Avenue launched a Facebook app in April 2011 and with transactions now hitting a half million a week, the company's distributed workforce has a lot of talking to do, says Wijayawardhana. "We all work remotely. We run our IRC servers for chat on Rackspace Cloud Servers—so we are literally running our business on the cloud."

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