

AT-A-GLANCE

CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

E-commerce site offering diet and health solutions

CHALLENGE: Handling lots of traffic with flexibility, reliability, and support

RACKSPACE SOLUTION: Cloud Servers with Managed Service Level, including Cloud Files for backup and Cloud Load Balancers

BUSINESS OUTCOME: As their sites scale to handle traffic with ease, they are able to grow their business and revenue at a rapid pace.



BEYOND DIET FINDS RELIABILITY AND RAPID SCALING WITH RACKSPACE®

The health and diet site seamlessly handles huge traffic volumes with Rackspace® Cloud Servers with Managed Service Level and Cloud Load Balancers.

OVERVIEW

Isabel De Los Rios and Jeff Siegel founded Live Smart Solutions in 2008. Live Smart is a diet and nutrition company whose core business is a program to help people lose weight through diet and exercise.

Live Smart has also created a social network called Beyond Diet (beyonddiet.com), where customers can interact with each other and support one another as they transition into a healthier way of life. The company promotes a healthy lifestyle with educational books, videos, audio, and the site TheDietSolutionProgram.com.

Live Smart saw explosive growth in 2010, with revenue increasing 50 times over the previous year, the company reports. They expect to double revenue in 2011 and continue along their current growth trajectory. What was a two-person company has now grown to 20 employees, focused on teaching the most essential principles for weight loss and disease prevention.

HIGH TRAFFIC NUMBERS MEAN PERFORMANCE IS CRITICAL

To handle the traffic that comes to their sites and better support their end users' experience, Live Smart's top priorities were reliability, support, and flexibility. Live Smart evaluated both dedicated and cloud solutions in determining how to best support visitors to their website.

In learning about the myriad hosting options available, Cloud Hosting emerged as the ideal match for their business. "We often get a million hits a day," says Rob Volk, Chief Technology Officer at Live Smart and Beyond Diet. "It's important that we can elastically scale out our server farm when we have high traffic, then contract it again."

A number of factors influenced the decision to choose a cloud solution. "First was cost," says Volk. "It's significantly cheaper to go to the cloud." Flexibility was also an important variable. "Going in, we didn't know how many servers we'd need, or what configuration we

needed. With dedicated, you lose some flexibility. You'd say what you think you want, but it's a real piece of hardware. That can be much more expensive, due to economies of scale." Cloud computing's ability to transition capital expenditures to operating expenditures helps Live Smart manage their costs, as well.

"Our sites get about a million hits a day, so load balancing is vital to keeping our business up and running. With Rackspace Cloud Load Balancers, we know we have a reliable platform, and it's a big cost savings, too. The load balancers are definitely handling a lot—we've had no problems, and they're scaling beyond what we can imagine."

Rob Volk, Chief Technology Officer, Live Smart Solutions

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“Because we use Cloud Servers with a managed service level, Rackspace is helping with our Linux and Windows support.

They’ll make our changes as we need them, and respond to any issue, 24 hours a day. Within minutes, an engineer will log on to fix the problem.”

Rob Volk, Chief Technology Officer, Live Smart Solutions

CHOOSING A CLOUD PROVIDER

Before coming to Rackspace, Live Smart was hosted on a different major cloud platform. “It allowed us to scale easily, but we didn’t have root access to the boxes and deployments could take hours at the time,” says Volk. “The most disappointing thing about [our previous host] was their support. We called them because our site was intermittently down and their tech actually said ‘I’m going to downgrade this from critical to important.’ We got right off them.”

Volk explored many of the players in the cloud computing landscape, committed to finding the best offering. “We looked at one of the other major cloud companies,” he says. “They offered a slightly richer features set, but their support was really not there. You had to pay a significant amount of money to get what you get for free at Rackspace. The Managed Service Level [for Cloud Servers] is a whole other level the other company didn’t even have.”

FLEXIBILITY ON THE CLOUD: SCALING IN MINUTES

Live Smart moved their computing to Rackspace in May 2010, and now use Cloud Servers with Managed Service Level, as well as Rackspace Cloud Load Balancers and Cloud Files. “We chose Rackspace for the support, and also the service you get: extremely fast configuring and it’s highly flexible,” says Volk.

The scalability of Cloud Servers has been a big asset for Live Smart. “We love being able to scale both horizontally and vertically,” says Volk. “After New Year’s, everyone goes on a diet, so that’s when our traffic peaks. We might get three times the traffic from January to March. With Cloud Servers, we’re able to spin up new web front ends within a matter of minutes, and then take them back down once traffic goes down. We have this elasticity in our farm that is only possible in a virtualized environment.”

CLOUD LOAD BALANCERS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STABILITY AND VALUE

To handle the load, Live Smart had been using two HAProxy load balancers, running on two small Linux virtual servers. But that

configuration wasn’t perfect. “The virtual servers just went down sometimes,” says Volk. “We had some reliability issues before, because it was software-based.”

As soon as Rackspace announced cloud load balancers, Live Smart took advantage of the beta version. The cloud load balancers have been a great fit for Live Smart, allowing their sites to adeptly handle the million hits a day they receive. Live Smart is getting so much traffic that they wrote their own simple analytics traffic system, which pulls analytics that they store in Cloud Servers running Microsoft® SQL Server®.

Live Smart is now using ten or so cloud load balancers, one per domain. All of them are being used for production, as their staging environment lives on just one server.

Live Smart is also launching sites in French and Spanish, which means there will be an even bigger traffic load to balance. “The load balancers are definitely handling a lot, with no issues. They’re scaling beyond what we can imagine.”

RACKSPACE MEANS PEACE OF MIND

Why did Live Smart choose Rackspace, amid all their other options? “Reliability, of course, and then support was our main driver for going to Rackspace,” says Volk. “We know that we can call anytime and get someone on the phone.”

Fanatical Support® has made a significant difference in the time and effort Live Smart expends thinking about servers. “I can definitely relax more,” says Volk. “We had a part-time sys admin working on the site. It was not the best option for us. With the launch of Cloud Servers with a managed service level, Rackspace is helping with our Linux and Windows support. They’ll make our changes as we need them, and respond to any issue, 24 hours a day. Within minutes, an engineer will log on to fix the problem.”

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