# rackspace®
## HOSTING

## MLG
### Major League Gaming ™

# RACKSPACE GIVES MAJOR LEAGUE GAMING (MLG) THE POWER OF SCALE

## Hybrid hosting offers MLG the scale, flexibility, and support they need to keep the gamers gaming.

## OVERVIEW

As one of the largest online professional videogaming leagues in the world, MLG represents millions of the world's best professional gamers and offers aspiring gamers the chance to compete, practice, and socialize via MLG's massive network of sites.

The MLG website sponsors live gaming competitions for console and PC gamers. The competitions involve maintaining connectivity for players and streaming content for spectators, while at the same time creating a seamless experience for visitors browsing the site.

Running a high traffic site for resource-heavy applications with millions of user posts, game demos, recordings of past competitions, along with other game-related media, MLG needed a hosting company that could support the variable nature of their traffic and take over the burdensome task of maintaining the infrastructure required to grow their online presence, helping them focus on launching applications faster.

## WHY RACKSPACE?

"We host up to a dozen events a year. During an event, traffic can spike up to 15 times normal levels. Building out dedicated hardware to handle these peak loads doesn't make sense," says Brian Corrigan, CTO of MLG.

MLG also needed a solution to support dedicated network and security-sensitive applications. Typically, that would mean either using a cloud-based vendor to handle bursty traffic and a different provider for dedicated servers, or worse, enduring the financial and time-intensive investment of building and maintaining it all in-house.

"We considered a full virtual environment for our online properties, but realized it was suicide to go all in. By the time we bought a VM that could handle the I/O we needed, we'd have been better off with a dedicated box," Corrigan recalls.

Rackspace offers MLG another option – hybrid hosting. With hybrid hosting, Rackspace customers can connect dedicated servers with Cloud Servers™.

This functionality gives customers the flexibility of running security or compliance-heavy applications on managed servers with the option of tapping cloud infrastructure for traffic spikes or testing environments. "No one should be launching a new large scale app on a platform that doesn't at least have hybrid capability. If you do, you're crazy," says Corrigan.

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For MLG, the Virtual Machine (VM) model lets them design apps differently. Using physical hardware, an app has to use up all of the available computing power to avoid wasted capacity. However, with VMs, "You get the most bang for your buck because you can optimize the machine around the app, rather than the other way," according to Corrigan.

MLG uses cloud environments to run their app servers, allowing them to expand capacity up and down based on demand. They also have dedicated hardware to handle databases and I/O-heavy operations. Both platforms are connected with RackConnect, which links dedicated and cloud environments using an F5® BIG-IP® Local Traffic Manager™. When additional compute power is added from the cloud, it's immediately available for use, and when the need subsides, they can scale down. The connected infrastructure allows them to manage both platforms from one control panel. They also receive a consolidated invoice for all of their services, and there's only one phone number to call if they have an issue with any part of their configuration.

## THE BENEFITS OF HYBRID HOSTING AT RACKSPACE

### Increased Speed

Previously using only dedicated hardware, MLG lacked the flexibility to deliver an optimal user experience. The optimal experience for their users requires both platform availability and a fast time to market for new applications. "Our legacy code was on old hardware that made scaling it difficult. Now we use virtual machines to scale horizontally in the Cloud and get our apps running as efficiently as possible with minimal refactoring of old code," Corrigan shares. Using Opscode's Chef, they're able to automate post-provisioning tasks and content updates as well.

With physical hardware, they'd have to uninstall, clean, and rebuild for each new use. In their new environment, the machine becomes a component of the application and can be modified as needed. "With VMs, we can delete a machine and start over. It's faster and cleaner," says Corrigan.

### Reduced Cost

The biggest cost benefit for MLG is being able to temporarily provision extra capacity to cover big events and launches. According to Corrigan, a game launches and live events can temporarily increase traffic for a short period of time. Between peaks, MLG would be left with loads of unused capacity. Now, instead of putting their investments in hardware they'd only be tapping

for special events, they can invest in growing their business. "If you go out and spend money on a SAN and big iron, you better use it. Otherwise, you're stuck with sunk costs," he says.

Also, the cloud deployment model allows MLG's developers to have direct control of the machine. Many tasks previously performed by system administrators can now be done directly through custom code written by app developers, allowing more flexibility in staffing and reduced support costs.

### Fanatical Support®

"We're thrilled with the support we've received from your team," Corrigan states regarding his experience with Fanatical Support. Our award-winning brand – Fanatical Support – gives Corrigan peace of mind that at any time of the day or night he can contact us by phone and speak to a real person for resolution. "They answer the call in about 10 seconds, plus I know my Account Manager and techs on a first name basis," says Corrigan. Because we understand how important support is when you trust your mission-critical applications and hardware to Rackspace, we've built our reputation on providing an unmatched level of service. "Rackspace goes way above and beyond. When they say Fanatical Support, they really do deliver a world class service experience," says Corrigan.

## CONCLUSION

For MLG, hybrid hosting is critical. Since implementation, they've realized an 80% increase in performance over their previous architecture while also seeing significant cost savings. Corrigan's advice to others seeking hosting services: "You'll eventually end up with a scaling problem that's most cost effectively solved with hardware; so choose a hosting vendor that gives you the most flexibility." For MLG, that's Rackspace. Corrigan concludes, "Hybrid and the ability to scale on demand becomes the new 'table stakes' in the online world. You're at a disadvantage if you don't have it."

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