

## AT-A-GLANCE

**CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:** Specialized e-commerce sites for home improvement products and supplies

**CHALLENGES:** Availability of e-commerce site is vital to support high traffic and transactions

**RACKSPACE SOLUTION:** Dedicated servers, firewalls, advanced monitoring

**BUSINESS OUTCOME:** Revenue increases as site remains available and dependable

# **NTSUPPLY.COM**

## SEARCH FOR SERVICE-ORIENTED PROVIDER LEADS E-COMMERCE SITE TO RACKSPACE® HOSTING

**Fanatical Support® was just what the customer wanted**

### COMPANY OVERVIEW

National Trade Supply was launched by two friends in 2003 as a website dedicated to selling furnace filters. Though the company has grown dramatically—now operating 16 separate websites and booking \$28 million in sales last year—NTS remains a lean organization. It has just 20 employees, and only one of them is devoted to IT.

As an e-commerce company, NTS (ntsupply.com) is entirely dependent on the functionality of its websites. And to ensure they remain up and running virtually non-stop, the company relies on Rackspace Hosting.

"There are only two or three companies we do business with that I can endorse without hesitation, and Rackspace is at the top of the list," says Tyler Dishman, NTS Co-founder and current Vice President of Technology.

### FOCUS ON SERVICE MAKES RACKSPACE STAND OUT

National Trade Supply, once ranked the fourth fastest-growing e-commerce business in the U.S., has depended on third-party hosting from the very start. Dishman developed the site's content and had it hosted by a small, local company in Indianapolis. Looking back, he says that initial hosting experience was ill-advised. But he really didn't know any better.

"Once, on the day after Thanksgiving, our whole site shut down. The server had crashed. It should have been a big sales day for us, and we had no way of doing business. Zero transactions. And when I talked with the support people, I wasn't sure they knew much more than I did about how to fix the problem."

When Dishman began searching for a new hosting company, his first priority was finding a partner that was service-oriented. He surveyed larger companies that he knew from

e-commerce trade shows and heard glowing recommendations for Rackspace.

"Rackspace was exactly what I was looking for. Their focus on service—what they call 'Fanatical Support'—really attracted me to them. And they've delivered on that promise time and again."

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**Tyler Dishman**, Co-founder and VP of Technology

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experience *fanatical support*®

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**Tyler Dishman**, Co-founder and VP of Technology

NTS started with an entry-level server from Rackspace—and still found it offered more bandwidth, more disk space, and better support than NTS had received in the past.

“One of the things I liked about Rackspace was that they always give you a dedicated server,” he notes. “With smaller companies, you couldn’t tell what you were getting.”

He notes that the local hosting company NTS initially used had just three employees. “So every problem had to be solved by those three people, those three brains. Rackspace seems to have armies of people who can contribute ideas. If you’ve got a firewall problem, they’ve got another army.”

The company’s web traffic now averages roughly 1000 transactions a day, and the increased traffic has never been an issue for Rackspace. Dishman quickly acknowledges he didn’t know anything about security best practices when he designed the early NTS sites. Over time, vulnerabilities were discovered in the way the software interacted with the hardware.

“Rackspace was very responsive and efficient at shutting down that problem.” Afterwards, Dishman added a firewall to the site based on Rackspace’s recommendation and restricted web server login access to NTS’ own offices.

He has also added more bandwidth and memory from time to time as the company’s business and web traffic have grown. “We’ve never hesitated to add upgrades when we think they’re appropriate,” he says. “There’s no doubt we’re getting good value from Rackspace.” In fact, he says, the last time he evaluated the cost of NTS’ hosting

service from Rackspace, he was amazed at the value. “The cost of our Rackspace hosting is an embarrassingly small part of the overall cost of running the company—a small fraction of one percent. And frankly, the whole company hinges on it.”

What makes the value even more impressive is the expert and free Fanatical Support. “Obviously, customer service is a big part of our own company and its success. So when I consider what Rackspace has done, I find it very impressive that they’ve made support such a central focus. Their people are always helpful and responsive, they never question my actions and never hesitate to help,” Dishman says. “And they communicate well with me. To be able to get on the phone when you’ve got a critical issue, and talk to someone who really seems to know what they’re doing—that’s very reassuring.”

Dishman says he doesn’t abuse the privilege. If he thinks he can solve a problem himself, he does. But when he asks for help, he really needs it. And he’s never been disappointed. “They not only work to solve my problem until it’s fixed, but they share their ideas and process. They’re very descriptive. So with any luck, I can learn from them for the next problem that occurs.”

Looking ahead, Dishman knows that as National Trade Supply grows and evolves, Rackspace will be more than able to provide whatever infrastructure it needs. “I’ll probably be a Rackspace customer for life.”

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