Rackspace® HOSTING

posterous

POSTEROUS FINDS AN EASY FIT AT RACKSPACE®
A hybrid solution gives predictability and support to the fast-growing company

In 2008, a group of guys wanted to share their musings, photos, and videos with friends, but they didn't like how hard it was. Out of that frustration — and opportunity — Posterous was born.

Now one of the most popular ways to share content with friends and family, Posterous allows users to create their own public or private site, by doing what comes most easily—just sending an email.

CHALLENGES OF THEIR EARLY HOSTING SOLUTION

In 2010, Posterous made the jump from a completely cloud-based footprint to a hybrid solution, placing some of their heavily-used database and application servers on dedicated gear. Some of what they had been running on the cloud was a better match for dedicated servers: "Since the cloud is multi-tenant, other customers would be sharing our box at the same time we'd be experiencing a high amount of traffic, and that would cause performance issues," says Vincent Chu, director of engineering at Posterous. That translated into slower load times for photos being shared. Posterous also used a separate Amazon-based storage solution for media files.

DEDICATED SERVERS PREDICTABILITY AND CLOUD FLEXIBILITY

"The downside of using virtualized hardware became apparent," remembers Chu, "So we started shopping around for dedicated services. We looked at Rackspace, SoftLayer, and a few others and we thought Rackspace would be better for a dedicated hosting provider. We were pretty happy with Slicehost, and we knew they were coming into the Rackspace fold."

Posterous users are sharing their lives globally these days, which means rich media files must be available around the world, and quickly. "We were entirely on Amazon S3 for storage, but we're now considering moving to Cloud Files because we can see the traction with the CDN capabilities," says Chu.

> "Rackspace has been a really great partner with us in terms of growing our infrastructure. Fanatical Support® has always been there, and the transparency has been great. We love having all of our stuff in one place."
>
> **Vincent Chu,** Director of Engineering

"We realized that we do need a CDN (Content Delivery Network) provider. We're approaching the scale of things where having CDN would help site performance-especially overseas."

FROM STARTUP TO ESTABLISHED FAVORITE

The media-sharing company has matured from a brilliant startup, drawing investment from angel investors and venture capitalists, to a core service heavily used by millions. Their growth has meant hiring additional employees, and their engineers have put a lot of consideration into the smartest way to scale. "Bringing it all under one roof is a huge advantage," Chu says of the possible move from Amazon storage to Cloud Files.

Support flexibility is an important issue to consider. "Earlier on, we had some issues where we wanted some extra support, and the support options with Amazon are all or nothing," says Chu. "Either you are left to the forums and get no help whatsoever, or you have to spend money for extra support which was too costly at our scale."

POWERING THE LONG TAIL

Posterous' network of sites attract nearly 11 million visitors a month[1]. That's a lot of traffic for any site to handle, but in Posterous' case, it's more complex still. "Our traffic is very long tail," says Chu. "In any given two hour window, we serve something like 150,000 distinct files." Serving all those files quickly, across the globe, is a perfect use of Rackspace Cloud Files and the Akamai CDN.

Chu has been pleased with the functionality of the Rackspace control panel. "The myrackspace.com reporting tools are pretty mature and give you a lot of transparency, which lets you see the state of things very easily," he says.

OPTIMUM CHOICES FOR HYBRID HOSTING

Though they made the move from virtual servers to physical ones last year, Posterous is considering using Cloud Servers for a growing portion of their compute hosting in the future. "We've decided that we shouldn't be completely on dedicated gear. There is a certain class of job that has to be on dedicated, but not all of it," Chu explains, "The really essential beefy stuff, like database or app servers, should be on dedicated for predictability and performance reasons. But a bunch of our asynchronous jobs that don't require super low latency—those things could go in the cloud. The demand for that infrastructure can be more spiky."

According to Posterous, the company's page views are increasing dramatically in 2011, and Chu anticipates that their Rackspace footprint will grow along with their business.

[1]. According to Quantcast on May 5, 2011.

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