



AT SIX FLAGS, THE THEME IS TRUST FOR RACKSPACE® SERVERS AND SUPPORT

Highly available servers, cloud computing leadership, and Fanatical Support® sets high standards for vendor and service quality.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Every year, hundreds of millions of families visit Six Flags Entertainment Corporation's theme parks in search of value-packed thrills. But if the company's website goes down, those thrills are gone. "Our website, sixflags.com, is a major venue for our ticket and season pass sales," explains Sean Andersen, Director, Interactive Services, Six Flags. "As one of our primary commerce engines, it needs to be highly available."

Six Flags has always used an external hosting provider for its website and e-commerce applications servers. Over time, the company became dissatisfied with its hosting services vendor. "We weren't getting the level of support we needed," Andersen says. "They were also selling us adjunct services that we didn't really need or use."

Six Flags needed a provider that it could truly trust. That provider turned out to be Rackspace.

AVAILABILITY CRITICAL— ESPECIALLY DURING PEAK SEASON

Andersen, who joined Six Flags right after the company moved to Rackspace, wasn't surprised that working with the hosting provider was a pleasure. "I've used Rackspace in previous jobs," he explains. "And in over ten years, I have never had a negative issue with them. I have never felt frustrated with them—not once. That is unheard of in a client-vendor relationship."

Rackspace took care of sixflags.com from an availability standpoint by ensuring that its server infrastructure is highly redundant. This is particularly important during the company's summer peak season. "We run promotions to drive traffic to the

AT-A-GLANCE

CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS: World's largest regional theme park

GOALS: Website high-availability for ticket sales through major traffic spikes

RACKSPACE SOLUTION: Dedicated Server Clusters, Firewalls, Load Balancers, SAN Storage, Advanced Monitoring, and Cloud Files for storage of media files

BUSINESS OUTCOME: No lost revenue for online ticket sales

site," Andersen says. "With Rackspace, we can design the services we need on the back end to process the orders that result, without having to worry about hardware or operating systems." Six Flags always knows that, thanks to Rackspace, its website will be available even during major traffic spikes.

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Sean Andersen, Director, Interactive Services

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Sean Andersen, Director, Interactive Services

Six Flags uses Rackspace for other portions of its business as well. For instance, a development environment for the company’s social media programmers is currently hosted on its own, dedicated Rackspace server environment. “We use external agencies for this development work,” Andersen explains. “Rackspace lets us give them an environment completely separate from the rest of our infrastructure. We always have complete control over what the programmers can touch.”

JUMPING AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

Andersen also values the industry expertise Rackspace offers. When Six Flags became interested in building out an intranet portal to support its 30,000 seasonal workers, it discovered that Rackspace was already familiar with the software it wanted to use—Microsoft SharePoint 2010—even though, at the time, the software was not commercially available. “I was very impressed that Rackspace had anticipated our needs that way,” Andersen says. “It really demonstrates the fanaticism of their support, and how they jump ahead of the competition by being proactive about industry trends.”

Andersen is also pleased that Rackspace offers cloud computing services. “We’re very interested in how cloud computing could allow us to cut back on our dedicated environment,” Andersen says. “Because Rackspace has demonstrated leadership in this area, it helps us with our long-range IT planning.” Andersen believes that moving to a cloud computing platform, which would allow Six Flags to scale up or down depending on its website traffic volume, could ultimately reduce its hosting costs by 30 percent or more.

Andersen also expects Six Flags to consider Rackspace cloud computing for specific digital initiatives, such as its dedicated television network.

COMMITTED TO ITS CUSTOMERS

Whether it’s tackling current website traffic patterns or planning for the future, Andersen knows Rackspace delivers the attention and support he needs. “The quality of Rackspace support is the standard we use for every other Six Flags vendor,” Andersen says. “Whether the issue is as simple as a password re-set or as complex as a server outage, Rackspace is always ready to help. And it doesn’t matter what time of day it is. It could be three in the afternoon or three in the morning, we can always reach someone.”

Knowing that Rackspace support is always there, ready to listen to Andersen’s needs and immediately address any issues that arise, is a primary reason the company continues to earn Six Flags’ trust. “When you close out a ticket with Rackspace support, they always ask you to tell them if their response to your request was satisfactory,” Andersen notes. “That they are so interested in customer feedback speaks volumes about their commitment to their customers. They really make us feel like they appreciate that Six Flags is their customer.”

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