



## Southern Web Group Trusts Rackspace with its Hundreds of WordPress Sites

**Rackspace® Cloud Sites lets the owner of a full-service design company free himself from the demands of managing servers.**

Based in Atlanta, Southern Web Group is a full-service web design firm that provides its clients with everything from initial wireframes to ongoing marketing and social media strategies. The firm's five web developers serve hundreds of clients—primarily real estate agencies, law firms, medical practices, and manufacturing companies.

After one of their dedicated servers was hacked, Southern Web Group decided to look for a new web host—one that could offer them reliability, scalability, and a solid platform for their hundreds of WordPress sites. Rackspace Cloud Sites fit the bill, freeing up the developers to focus on their clients, not their servers.

### CHOOSING RACKSPACE

When they launched in 2004, Southern Web Group leased dedicated servers to host their clients' sites. None of the firm's five developers are system administrators, and they found managing servers to be a time-consuming pain.

"We had 10 dedicated and unmanaged web servers," says Southern Web Group president Drew Barton. "We were responsible for maintenance, operating system updates, email deliverability, backups, and security concerns. It was a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year commitment."

The more Southern Web Group grew as a business, the more inconvenient this arrangement became. "For years," Barton says, "I literally had a phone attached to my hip, waiting for a server alert. I went three years without taking a vacation. I was a prisoner of my business."

When one of the firm's servers was hacked, Barton decided it was finally time to switch hosts and outsource system administration. "The bigger your business becomes," Barton says, "the more you have to fire yourself from different things that you have to leave to the experts. I know how to build great-looking websites and get them to show up in search results, but I shouldn't have to know how to thwart a denial of service attack. I should leave that up to the folks who know how to do it best."

### AT-A-GLANCE

#### CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

Southern Web Group is a full-service web design firm that provides its clients with everything from initial wireframes to ongoing marketing and social media strategies.

#### CHALLENGES:

Managing dedicated servers without a system administrator on staff was painful, time-consuming, and unreliable. They needed a managed hosting solution that could handle traffic spikes and be a solid platform for their WordPress sites.

#### RACKSPACE SOLUTION:

Cloud Sites for their hundreds of WordPress sites.

#### BUSINESS OUTCOME

As Southern Web Group's hosting bills have decreased and their uptime has increased, their staff can sleep easy and take vacations. They no longer worry about server outages or traffic spikes. Best of all, 24-hour support from Rackspace helps Southern Web Group give their own clients an excellent experience.

In addition to the reliability of a fully managed host, Barton was looking for a solution that offered scalability and a strong platform for the company's many WordPress sites. After considering and dismissing several hosting

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**Drew Barton**

President, Southern Web Group

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"If you want to see how good a possible business partner is in terms of support, I always recommend giving customer support a call at 3 a.m. If someone answers, that's a company you can rely on. We did that before we moved to Rackspace. Knowing that someone is always there, always on—that's a feeling of comfort."

**Drew Barton**  
President, Southern Web Group

options, Barton migrated all of his clients' sites to Rackspace Cloud Sites and hasn't looked back. "We're happy to have that page turned," he says.

## WORDPRESS IN THE CLOUD

Besides relieving Southern Web Group of their sys admin duties, Rackspace Cloud Sites provides a superior platform for the firm's 300 WordPress sites.

"There are big advantages to being on the cloud with WordPress," Barton says. "One of the advantages is that we can do one-button upgrades to the latest version of WordPress. We can upgrade and add plugins without using FTP. In the case of a dedicated server, you'd have to deal with SSH or root access. You don't have to have to deal with that on Cloud Sites."

Using Rackspace Cloud Sites also improves efficiency and reduces risk, says Barton. "We save a lot of time and manpower, and we also reduce the risk of errors that comes with doing WordPress upgrades."

Barton says that Rackspace Cloud Sites also helps his sites stay secure. "We're a Linux shop, and now with Cloud Sites we don't have to deal with Linux updates and security patches. This keeps our sites more secure from malware and hackers."

"The performance is great, too," says Barton. "We don't miss dedicated servers at all."

## LOOKING FORWARD TO TRAFFIC SPIKES

As a web design firm that also handles marketing and social media for many clients, Southern Web Group wanted to make sure that driving traffic to their clients' sites wouldn't cause server problems. Dedicated servers presented the possibility that sudden traffic spikes could cause crashes. With the Rackspace Cloud, scalability is built in.

"Being in Atlanta, we have a number of clients that appear on CNN and Headline News," Barton says. "I called Rackspace and said, 'What happens when a client goes on national news and their web address goes across the screen? Will that crash the server?' The sales Racker said, 'We welcome our clients to get those events, because our system is built to withstand those events.' He was right—the Sites are able to handle a surge of traffic like that. With dedicated, you're concerned about the maximum number of user sessions. That fear goes away with Cloud Sites."

Rackspace Cloud's scalability also means that the firm never has to worry about the size of their clients' available disk space. "If they want 20GB of space, they can have 20GB space," says Barton. "We're not going to limit them."

## SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT THANKS TO FANATICAL SUPPORT® SERVICE

Once on 24-hour call, Barton can now rest easy, knowing Rackspace has his back. "It's really nice that someone is managing my servers while I'm asleep," he says. "If you want to see how good a possible business partner is in terms of support, I always recommend giving customer support a call at 3 a.m. If someone answers, that's a company you can probably rely on. We did that before we moved over to Rackspace. Knowing that someone is always there, always on—that's a feeling of comfort."

This all-hours support was what differentiated Rackspace from its competitors for Barton, who says, "The reason we didn't go with Amazon is they didn't have the customer service component that we needed. Our business offers an extremely high level of handholding. If you don't have that from your service provider, you can't give it to your client."

Would Barton recommend Rackspace Cloud to others? "Absolutely," he says. "We save time, money, and headaches on the cloud. I've watched our hosting bill decrease, and our uptime increase."

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