



### AT-A-GLANCE

#### CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

Spire, LLC delivers buyer behavior insights and product recommendations to regional grocery chains.

#### CHALLENGES:

Spire's founders knew the company would accumulate a vast amount of data from shoppers, but they didn't want the headaches and distraction of tending to a growing IT infrastructure. From day one, the founders decided to outsource their entire IT infrastructure to a reliable partner.

#### RACKSPACE SOLUTION:

A dedicated farm of high-powered database servers that grew with the company's needs. These servers feature a dedicated SAN array from EMC with managed service, complete with **Fanatical Support**® to keep Spire's analytic applications running 24x7x365.

#### BUSINESS OUTCOME:

Spire has grown steadily since 2007 by producing timely and relevant product recommendations to its clients. With Rackspace managing its IT infrastructure, Spire has been able to focus on its core competency: processor-intensive shopper analytics.

## Spire Empowers Regional Grocers with Consumer Analytics Partnering with Rackspace & EMC offered a full menu of hosted solutions.

Grocery chains tighten their own belts during any economic downturn. Even though food is a staple item, many grocers see their bottom lines growing thinner as customers opt to buy cheaper groceries.

Fortunately, Spire LLC is there to help. Through superior marketing analytics, this Connecticut-based company helps grocers put products on the shelves that shoppers are happy to take home for their dinner tables. To do this, Spire collects purchase data from grocery shoppers all across America. This data is transmitted to analysts who crunch the numbers to create insightful reports for their clients, regional and local grocery stores and food producers.

By following these recommendations, Spire's clients can grow revenues and boost shopper

loyalty. Spire CEO Paul Taylor says his business is all about the power of relevance. "Shoppers don't want the constant noise of an inbox full of pitch laden e-mails," he says. "Isn't it more relevant to analyze purchase data and put products on the shelves that we know they want and have proven they'll buy?"

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**Paul Taylor**  
CEO, Spire

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But gaining these insights takes digging through vast amounts of data. Spire collects data anonymously, by giving shoppers a loyalty card to present when they check out at their grocery store. The data from these transactions—covering 30 million American households—feeds Spire's proprietary shopper analytics software. All that data, and the analytics engine to process it, demands a huge farm of high-powered, database servers running day and night. That's why Spire turned to Rackspace, and why Rackspace chose an innovative storage solution from EMC.

### RACKSPACE FULLY MANAGES SPIRE'S IT

Before founding Spire in 2007, Taylor and his partner, Brian Ochs, worked at another firm

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**Ken Pereyra**  
VP of Technology, Spire

where they were responsible for marketing intelligence and technology development. That experience taught them how tedious and frustrating managing their own IT infrastructure could be. They were determined not to allow IT issues to become obstacles to their success at Spire.

Taylor and Ochs looked for a hosting provider that mirrored their own company: hungry, agile, and driven. Most of all, they looked for a partner that offered a full menu of managed solutions. “We wanted to outsource our entire infrastructure. We’ve lived it ourselves, managing the entire spectrum of hardware, software, and data. The distraction from your core business is significant,” notes Ochs. “Being able to offload all that and not have to worry about it was the single biggest reason we chose Rackspace.”

They’re happy with that choice: Since it began, Spire has smoothly quadrupled in size. Each new regional grocer the company takes on brings more marketing challenges that demand complex analytical solutions. Some of these solutions require algorithms so intricate that Spire needs an even bigger helping of IT power than before. When those times come, the course of action for Spire couldn’t be simpler—**call Rackspace**.

“Today, we might have 65 users out of the chute, but it’s going to grow to 500 users in three months,” explains Taylor. “I need a partner that can grow with us at that pace. So we count on our core partner, Rackspace.” Rackspace can spin up the right combination of hardware and software in a matter of hours, allowing Spire to focus on its real business.

## **AN ARRAY OF SERVICE OPTIONS**

Spire has come to rely on Rackspace for its flexible service offerings. Rackspace has contacted Spire before every major deployment with best case, worst case, and most likely scenarios. Taylor says these service options keep Spire up and running without a hiccup, and give his company a level of comfort that other service providers can’t deliver.

“They check in with us from time to time in a very appropriate manner, working with us on forecasting our upcoming IT needs.” The level of support that Rackspace provides called Fanatical Support dovetails perfectly into Spire’s core value of customer service. “When we call, someone is going to answer. When we have an issue, someone is going to jump on it. Often before we even know there’s a problem, they’re already addressing it. Going well above and beyond what you’d expect from customer support—that’s what Fanatical Support does for us.”

Even weekends and holidays, Rackspace support is always on hand. “I never have to look at an alternative outsourcing solution, either from a

## **ALL BACKED BY FANATICAL SUPPORT.**

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cost or a service standpoint,” says Taylor. “Rackspace has been right there with us as we continue to push the technology to do more. If anybody asks me how I handle all this data, I gladly tell them it’s Rackspace.”

## **THE RIGHT IT AT THE RIGHT TIME**

When Spire first came to Rackspace, the company only needed a single server with internal disk drives. As more grocers took a seat at Spire’s table, Rackspace recommended a DAS MD 3000 to hold more data and access it faster. However, it wasn’t long before Spire outgrew their single DAS and needed to expand its capacity and increase the performance of their storage solution. Again, Rackspace filled these needs by serving up multiple DAS 3200 arrays and 1220s expansion shelves. But Spire’s demand for resources kept increasing.

“We were saturating the I/O capabilities of those DAS devices,” says Spire VP of technology Ken Pereyra. “Rackspace recommended we go with EMC’s VNX 5300. It allowed us to use multiple shelves of 15 x 600 GB SAS drives and one additional shelf of 15 x 200 GB SSD drives, which our SQL Server applications needed.” The VNX 5300 takes advantage of EMC’s Flash 1st technology, which serves up the most-used data from 2 TB of Flash drives. It can also dynamically absorb any unpredicted spikes in SQL queries.

Spire now enjoys an extra helping of disk I/O that speeds up its database response times, helping its SQL Server cache data more efficiently while decreasing the storage footprint.

## **SPIRE, RACKSPACE, AND EMC: A WINNING TEAM**

Despite its tremendous growth, Spire still maintains a small IT department. Without Rackspace and EMC, Spire would have to at least double its IT staff and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on hardware. On top of the cost savings, Spire continues to enjoy the peace of mind that comes with having Rackspace manage its IT infrastructure.

Knowing a customer’s needs, values, and spending habits are critical to successful marketing, but even grocers sitting on a mountain of data lack the time and resources to take any meaningful action based on it. With Rackspace’s help, Spire can focus on its core competency: keeping foods flying off the supermarket shelves and onto America’s dinner tables.

**EMC<sup>2</sup>**

As Taylor puts it, “Rackspace has always been there for us providing the relevant solutions that we need. At the end of the day, the shopper says ‘I’m happy.’ Everybody’s business grows when you do that.”

