

BankersEdge

BankersEdge Looks to the Future Through Rackspace® Disaster Recovery Solution

Pennsylvania-based BankersEdge has relied on Rackspace for the past three years to provide its award-winning Fanatical Support®, 100 percent guaranteed network uptime, 24x7x365 live technical support and Intensive Windows-expertise to ensure they can continue to provide quality, online training to a breadth of customers. Now BankersEdge will rely on Rackspace to keep operations running, even in the event of a disaster, through Rackspace's disaster recovery solution.

Situation

In today's fast paced banking environment, and ever changing federal regulations, financial institutions cannot spare time to develop quality training courses for their employees. However, these training courses are critical for employees to better understand their company's policies and procedures as well as updated regulatory changes. So to make sure their employees get this crucial training without the worry and hassle of developing it internally, these financial institutions turn to BankersEdge.

More than 1,200 financial institutions rely on BankersEdge for quality, online retail banking training courses. Their in-depth training covers regulatory compliance, banking fundamentals, product knowledge, and service and selling skills. BankersEdge offers a diverse selection of more than 220 fully customizable courses. Involving real world examples and interactive case studies, these courses are flexible, easily navigated and much more fun and engaging than clicking through a standard PowerPoint presentation.

For more than seven years BankersEdge has provided these courses, completely customized toward each individual institution's own terminology, policy and procedures, and even business style. The company's Management Administration and Reporting System (MARS) allows customers a flexible and easy-to-use reporting tool to track progress and results. All courses are available across the Internet or deployed remotely on a customer's Learning Management System. This makes it easy for employees to load onto their desktop and complete when convenient.

This being said, network uptime is essential to BankersEdge's continued growth and success of delivering quality online training. With any downtime, BankersEdge loses credibility with its customers.

"BankersEdge prides itself on delivering quality training," says Jeff Kirkell, chief technical architect, BankersEdge. "Our service is geared toward banks and financial institutions, so we strive to ensure our content is understandable and effective, and we rely on Rackspace to deliver this service with 100 percent uptime so it can be accessed anytime, day or night."

Prior to hosting with Rackspace, BankersEdge had a few servers in a collocation facility in Florida. With the collocation facility, they were personally responsible for all the server upkeep and administration. "We were perfectly capable of keeping the servers up and running, but it wasn't part of our core business," says Kirkell. "It was taking too much time and manpower away from our revenue-generating focus of creating and distributing quality online training."

In 2003, BankersEdge created a new version of their existing application and decided to find a hosting provider with managed hosting solutions to take the reigns. After looking at three or four other providers, they decided on Rackspace.

MODIFIED DATE: 1-03-2008

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"When looking for a hosting provider, the most important thing we were looking for was network uptime," says Kirkell. "Rackspace guaranteed 100 percent network uptime, along with its service offerings and outstanding support, made them the best choice." BankersEdge started with just one server at Rackspace but within eight months had added three more, upgraded to a larger database, then added a second database and a load balancer.

Solution

BankersEdge has experienced a 30 percent growth, per year, over the past three years. Along with a growing company comes a growing list of clientele. To ensure their website can handle the growing traffic, BankersEdge has continued to upgrade its infrastructure within Rackspace. Today, they have four HP DL385 web servers running Windows 2003, two HP DL385 database servers running Windows 2003, managed backup, a Pix 515R firewall, a load balancer, custom monitoring and SQL Sage DBA service, all located in Rackspace's Virginia data center.

BankersEdge has relied on Rackspace Fanatical Support to make certain their courses and services are easily delivered online. So what might happen if something outside of Rackspace control were to affect the Virginia data center, and BankersEdge's application goes down?

To prevent BankersEdge from ever having to answer that question, they turned to Rackspace for a disaster recovery solution. "Currently, everything is in Rackspace's Virginia data center," says Kirkell. "However unlikely, if something were to happen to that data center, we could lose everything. Soon we are deploying a web server, database server and firewall in Rackspace's Dallas data center that can replicate our data. Essentially, if something did happen to the Virginia data center, within minutes, the Dallas server can support a significant number of our customers."

Benefits

However, Rackspace disaster recovery solution is not your typical 'hot spare.' The geographically redundant database is not just sitting on a rack in the data center, using up space and power, waiting for another server to fail. During non-critical times, this database will be utilized by BankersEdge. "We plan on moving our staging environment to the database in Dallas, which will utilize replication and data mirroring," says Kirkell. "It also gives us a tremendous amount of backup and redundancy that we have never had before."

With the flip of a switch, BankersEdge's disaster recovery database can be up and running in a matter of minutes. While a disaster recovery solution is an added expense, the feeling of knowing that if something unexpected happened, they will be able to continue with business as usual until the emergency is fixed. By relying on Rackspace to provide geographical redundancy, BankersEdge can avoid the headaches of always wondering 'what if' and worry more about 'what next?'

BankersEdge is currently developing a new application they plan on deploying later this year. "Another benefit of having that spare database, we can test our new application against the hardware prior to deploying it company wide," says Kirkell. "Rackspace has made it to where our geographically redundant environment in Dallas can have so many more functions than basic disaster recovery."

The disaster recovery database will be installed in March and within a matter of weeks will be fully operational. BankersEdge presently hosts its corporate data internally, but plans are in motion to back up some of that data in the Dallas data center, with their ultimate goal to offload as much internal data as possible to Rackspace.

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