

# Firefly Digital Glows for Rackspace®

## Case Study Synopsis

The server infrastructure supporting Firefly Digital and its customers was unstable, yet Firefly Digital had insufficient technical expertise in-house to track down and fix the problems easily. The Louisiana-based company had worked with external consultants and even tried hiring a so-called "Linux guru", but the costs were high and the results were mixed. Finally, Firefly Digital contacted Rackspace about providing comprehensive managed support, and Rackspace responded with a money-back guarantee to deliver the kind of highly reliable, highly available infrastructure that Firefly Digital needed to support its customers. Firefly Digital now supports its customers with greater reliability, greater availability and less day-to-day stress on its executives—and, since the day it moved its operations over to Rackspace, has never looked back with regret.

## Situation:

Two years ago, Bill Dalton was not a man who got much sleep. As the vice president and co-owner of Louisiana-based Firefly Digital, a web application and website development firm, Dalton was the "go-to guy" when a customer's website was not working properly. That year, instead of sleep, Dalton was getting pager alerts. Lots of them.

"We had a ton of problems," recalls Dalton. "We had one client that was receiving a huge volume of spam and overloading the mail servers, so I was getting a huge volume of alerts. We had situations where Apache would suddenly start to die on us, for no reason that we could see."

Dalton's third-party monitoring service—the source of his pager alerts—enabled him to catch these problems before they affected Firefly Digital's customers, but just barely. Their customers depend upon the availability of their servers and the dedicated content management system that makes Firefly Digital's service offerings distinct among web application and web hosting service providers. With customers ranging from the Seattle Sports Commission to the Bahamas Film Festival to Eurest Services, an extreme catering services company that provides online grocery ordering for chefs working on remote oil rigs in the North Sea, Firefly Digital had no room for downtime.

But overcoming these problems seemed a huge challenge. Firefly Digital was running its customers' websites and mail servers on Linux-based systems collocated in a local Internet service provider's data center, but the provider offered no hands-on server support. Dalton tried to overcome the problem by hiring someone billed as a Linux genius, but that proved to be a fiasco. "I learned that one man's genius is another man's hack," recalls Dalton, who ultimately had to fire the new hire. "I had hoped that hiring him would make my life better, but there was my pager, still going off two to three times each night."

## Solution:

One of Firefly Digital's project managers walked into Dalton's office with a postcard from Rackspace shortly after the company had let go of its Linux genius. "Bill," he said, "why don't you just call Rackspace? What can you lose?" Dalton was skeptical. He had worked with hosting companies with managed server solutions before, and his memories were not positive. The managed hosting company he used to deal with was a large, national company, and his was a small company. Most of the time, he felt as though his concerns and calls were just lost in the noise.

## Profile

Firefly Digital is a Louisiana-based web application and website development company. Its powerful content management applications enable customers to manage website content quickly and easily.

## Situation

Firefly Digital and its customers needed a more stable, reliably managed server infrastructure than Firefly Digital's local service provider could offer.

## Solution

Firefly Digital moved both its own operations and its customer sites to servers running in the Rackspace data center. Rackspace's Fanatical Support™ ensures the reliability and availability of the servers.

## Benefits

- High reliability and availability
- Rapid response
- Fanatical Support®

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"We've always considered ourselves to be strong on service, but Rackspace has set a whole new standard. Rackspace is showing us ways to give our customers better service. They're inspiring us."

**Bill Dalton** - Vice President and Co-Founder, Firefly Digital

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But Dalton's business partner joined a chorus of voices telling him to contact Rackspace, so he fired up his browser and surfed over to the Rackspace website. The memory still amuses him.

"I pulled up the Rackspace site and up popped that 'Live Chat' window," Dalton chuckles. "I thought, what have I got to lose? So I started having a chat right then and there."

What Dalton found quickly changed his mind about managed servers as a solution to Firefly Digital's challenges.

"Within a few minutes, I was talking to the proposal team," says Dalton, "and they were extremely professional, quickly moving from 'stop worrying' to 'let's talk about solutions.' I threw every concern I had at these guys, and they had answers. They were great."

What was immediately clear to Dalton was that the professionals at Rackspace knew exactly how to deal with the kinds of issues that were waking him up at night. Rackspace could provide the hardware, the services and the Fanatical Support that Firefly Digital needed to keep its customers up and running around the clock.

The proposal they've put together addresses every concern I raised; they've even increased the power of certain servers to ensure my ability to meet my clients' needs. And, they're offering all this for just a little more than I'm already paying for a service that's keeping me up at night. If what Rackspace was proposing to do was only 70% as good as it sounded, it would still be a great improvement.

"And do you know what?" Dalton continues. "It wasn't 70% as good—it was 120% as good."

**Benefits:**

What Firefly Digital needed—and what Rackspace delivered—was a set of robust servers and a set of predictable, reliable managed services to keep them running optimally. Rackspace Fanatical Support proved to be a key component of that solution.

Today, Firefly Digital runs its business on three Linux-based servers in a Rackspace data center. One server supports customer websites; a second provides support for customer mail services; a third server is dedicated to a single Firefly Digital customer. The Rackspace Zero-Downtime™ Network is designed so that Firefly Digital's servers experience network latency. The instant that Rackspace's network monitors detect a problem with one carrier, the self-healing network tools automatically reroute packets to one of several other carriers. "Everything Rackspace has put in place to support us has been a 100% first-rate, no-compromise solution," says Dalton, "and the support has been fantastic. If we put in a trouble ticket, Rackspace is back to us with answers within 15 minutes. I was expecting it to take

hours, if not days. After the first month, it became a game in our office to turn in tickets at weird hours—just to see how quickly Rackspace would respond. I think one of our guys actually stayed up till 2 a.m. one Sunday morning just to send in a ticket. Even then Rackspace was back to us within 15 minutes!"

While Dalton will be the first to admit that he sounds as though he is gushing when he talks about Rackspace, his enthusiasm has a keen business edge to it, too. "The ticketing system that Rackspace has is fantastic," he says. "It's been an inspiration to us, so we've decided to implement a very similar kind of system to support our own customers. We've always considered ourselves to be strong on service, but Rackspace has set a whole new standard. Rackspace is showing us ways to give our customers better service. They're inspiring us."

For Firefly Digital, Rackspace has eliminated the uncertainty that had bedeviled their old service delivery network. The servers run reliably and the customers remain happy, loyal and enthusiastic about the service and support that Firefly Digital provides. And Bill Dalton gets a good night's sleep.

"I can't even begin to say how great Rackspace has been," says Dalton. "Rackspace changed my life. My blood pressure is lower, I eat healthier, the sun rises earlier and the spring is warmer."

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"I've never felt that Rackspace is anything less than a true partner in our quest to do business. Rackspace tells me that Firefly Digital is an average-sized client, but they treat me like a king. Going with Rackspace has been the best business decision we've made outside of deciding to build the content management system that's at the heart of our business. Without Rackspace, we could not have grown the way we have."

**Bill Dalton** - Vice President and Co-Founder, Firefly Digital

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For more information, visit: [www.FireflyDigital.com](http://www.FireflyDigital.com)

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