

WorkshopLive, Inc.

WorkshopLive 'Bands' with Rackspace to 'Amp' Online Music Education

WorkshopLive produces the most dynamic and engaging music instruction content on the web today. Its patent-pending technology delivers the first truly interactive learning experience of its type, with visual and auditory elements that change to suit the preferences and abilities of the student. WorkshopLive incorporates more than 20 years of experience in music education and has created thousands of lessons in all styles of music. The privately funded company is based in Pittsfield, Mass.



Situation

When it comes to online music instruction, there really is no one who comes close to offering what WorkshopLive does. Building on more than 20 years of music instruction experience, the creators of WorkshopLive found a way to take product knowledge to the Internet. By breaking into the online medium, they have created a way to alleviate time constraints in today's fast-paced world, where time is a luxury.

Since their site launched on Dec. 27, 2005, they have added more than 10,000 high-quality videos and exercises that include 1,800 lessons containing very advanced interactive graphics with tabs and notations.

"Most other sites follow the talking head model where the user is forced to try and learn from watching a video alone," says Marilyn Hoeffner, vice president of IT/IS, WorkshopLive. **"We know that is not practical. You need to be able to see and interact with an illustration of the lesson exercise. With our player, you can control the tempo, show note names, fingerings or scale degrees. You can even select a selection of music and loop it over and over at a slower speed."**

WorkshopLive has two ways to pay for learning guitar, bass, drums or keyboard through this player. If you're just looking for a little instruction, you can purchase individual lessons, songs or courses at a flat, one-time rate. For the more dedicated learner, unlimited access can be purchased though monthly, quarterly or yearly subscriptions.

Either way allows access to your choice of an individual song, lesson or course, which are divided into four skill levels for each instrument. There are seven styles of songs to choose from: acoustic, blues, country, folk, holiday, jazz, and rock, with a variety of songs and artists in each category. They are the only online music education site that has licensed music from popular bands and singers.

More than two years of planning and development went into building the interactive player which contains the entire framework that presents the lessons. WorkshopLive knew how important uptime would be to the success of their online venture, so they came to Rackspace for a strong and reliable infrastructure.

Solution

During the two-year development, WorkshopLive housed their infrastructure with the developer of their software. In October of 2005, they decided to find a managed hosting specialist after experiencing several service problems with their developer.

"Service is what I wanted most," says Hoeffner. **"I just couldn't be worrying about managed hosting while at the same time developing and running the software. I needed to be problem-free on the infrastructure side. We couldn't handle any interruption to our site, so we decided to go with the company that had the best reputation."**

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WorkshopLive decided Rackspace's reputation for Fanatical Support® best fit what they were looking for. **"What I like about Rackspace is they are not just a hosting company; they are a service company,"** says Hoeffner. **"Many companies boast great service, but Rackspace backs it up with Fanatical Support and a large, reliable network."**

Hoeffner goes on to describe the transition from their developer to their servers at Rackspace as very smooth. She applauds Rackspace's excellent service level and support, working around the clock, in getting their infrastructure up and running.

WorkshopLive relies on Rackspace expertise to keep their application and databases available 24x7. While WorkshopLive streams and pushes their video from content network providers such as Akamai and Vital Stream, without Rackspace rock-solid infrastructure providing all the information about the lessons, such as the application data, graphic assets and animation files, their video product would be no different than their competitors.

Benefits

Hoeffner credits part of WorkshopLive's continued growth and success on Rackspace and its Fanatical Support promise. She knows that any web-based business must be available 24x7 or your customers and sales will suffer.

"Typically, any time we have had a problem, question or concern, we can absolutely, 100-percent know that the issue will be addressed and solved quickly," exclaims Hoeffner. **"Any issues we've had have been on our side and Rackspace has been excellent at getting into our configuration, finding out what's wrong, and getting it resolved promptly. To me, that's Fanatical Support."**

She also enjoys having that knowledge and expertise just a phone call away. **"The relationship my IT staff and I have with Rackspace is excellent. By far it is well above and beyond anything I could have hoped for,"** she says. **"The level of support and expertise they have is outstanding. Any time we need support or have a problem, not only are they easily accessible, but the actual support is very, very good."**

WorkshopLive has recently been hard at work developing their new software application, WorkshopLive 3.0, which is now live on their website. Hoeffner described the project as basically rewriting the entire application and that process went by rather fast without having to worry about their infrastructure.

"My IT department is structured around application development and database support so we haven't had time to worry about our hardware needs, especially with [WorkshopLive] 3.0 development," says Hoeffner. **"That's where a dependable partner like Rackspace comes in very handy. At this point I wouldn't consider moving from Rackspace. When you have an advanced software-as-a-service application like ours, it's a good piece of mind knowing that it's in good hands."**

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