rackspace
HOSTING

TweetPhoto

START-UP TWEETPHOTO FUELS GROWTH BY LEVERAGING FANATICAL SUPPORT® FROM RACKSPACE® HOSTING

Rackspace Provides Fortune 500-level IT Expertise to Help Young Company Navigate Early Growth Challenges.

OVERVIEW

TweetPhoto, Inc., got its start in March 2009 when its founder, Sean Callahan – then finishing his dissertation at business school in London – tweeted plans to launch a free photo-sharing service via Twitter, the popular micro-blogging service which allows users to communicate online in short messages of 140 characters or less.

Now approaching its first anniversary, TweetPhoto has delivered on that promise, enabling users to easily upload photos which are then automatically published and turned into tweets. The company differentiates itself by providing a superior user experience – allowing people to share, discover and interact with photos across social networks like Twitter and Facebook in a natural and engaging way. Callahan's 12-year entrepreneurial and customer service background in the financial services sector and with the Four Seasons luxury brand led TweetPhoto to adopt the same "customer first" mindset and apply it to photo-sharing.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

From its first 5,000-user pilot test in the spring of 2009, TweetPhoto now has over 4.3 million visits per month, according to Compete, Inc., a web analytics firm. TweetPhoto initially utilized The Rackspace Cloud, but as the young company developed relationships with the likes of the Twitter developer community, the number of users – and the number of photos being transmitted – rapidly mushroomed. TweetPhoto quickly graduated to Rackspace Managed Hosting.

A MAJOR FAN OF FANATICAL SERVICE

As the start-up grew, Callahan experienced Fanatical Support up close and personal, including leveraging sophisticated IT services ranging from engineering solutions expertise to comprehensive customer service and advanced trouble-shooting – a comprehensive suite of capabilities that is unique in the hosting industry.

Callahan recalls that TweetPhoto's website was under severe pressure in the early stages because the code wasn't built to scale and needed to be re-architected. "It was horrible," Callahan said. "The great support we got from Rackspace helped us get through a hard time – which lasted for two months of non-stop phone calls."

"The Rackspace Database Administrator (DBA) team made sure that we were doing everything possible to optimize the database," Callahan said. "This allowed us to get more from the database and take pressure off the web site so that we could buy time to re-develop everything. Rackspace DBAs did a great job of optimizing queries – I can't say that enough. They ended up helping us out so much that we were able to actually hire a new development team to rebuild the entire web site and used the very same APIs we offer to third-party application developers for their applications."

*experience **fanatical support***®

TweetPhoto

"The Rackspace DBA team did a great job of optimizing queries. They helped us out so much that we were able to actually hire a new development team to rebuild the entire website using the very same APIs we offer to third-party application developers."

Sean Callahan – Founder, TweetPhoto

SERVICE ABOVE AND BEYOND

Rackspace assisted   TweetPhoto's migration from Cloud to Managed Hosting, helping the company design a robust architecture for its solution platform – one that would support the dramatic rise in users that the company was experiencing.

"Rackspace helped us build a scalable architecture so that we are able to provide a really good experience to our users," Callahan stated. "With Rackspace's assistance, we ended up building an infrastructure that grows as our business grows."

TweetPhoto's architecture is a bit different from most social media platforms in that the company runs partly on Windows and partly on Linux. "Our photo-sharing API and the database run on Windows and the TweetPhoto.com application itself runs on Linux – a unique combination of joining the two technologies together all of which is built from out photo-sharing APIs. We don't have to hire a Database Administrator and technology experts for both – Rackspace helps us leverage everything," Callahan said, in a nod to the fact that Rackspace provides business efficiencies in addition to premium technical prowess.

Rackspace also included advanced trouble-shooting for TweetPhoto. "From finding bugs in the database and on the web site, DNS attacks, there was a load of things that Rackspace helped with, including answering questions like, 'How can we help the server perform better with the application?' to make the web site optimal for the user," Callahan said.

In one urgent situation, TweetPhoto's application was making unneeded Domain Name Service (DNS) queries with no caching, resulting in six to 20 DNS requests per page hit. As the company's web site traffic increased, the large number of DNS queries was crippling its networking infrastructure. Rackspace identified the problem and implemented a solution, giving TweetPhoto breathing room to handle increased traffic as it worked through its application issues.

"Rackspace has also helped us rapidly deploy technology," Callahan noted. "When we needed a new server before the Christmas and New Year's holidays, Rackspace was able to quickly get a server up and running for that peak period." TweetPhoto has almost tripled its footprint with Rackspace since its initial deployment.

A PARTNERSHIP WITH ALIGNED VALUES

Callahan advises other young companies to make sure that strategic partners share their company's values. "One of our values is to provide excellent customer service and support to our users – both consumers and developers who use our TweetPhoto API for their applications. It is great to have a service provider like Rackspace who is aligned with our values and shares our same philosophy. Rackspace has a great reputation for service and has certainly proven that with us."

DIFFERENTIATED HOSTING

Additionally, Callahan points out the efficiencies of working with Rackspace. "We focus on the business side and Rackspace focuses on the technology side. We don't have to deploy our own servers and configure them or have our own DBA, for example – this helps reduce costs in our business and also helps with support in general. The same thing is true with their Windows specialists, the engineering solutions team and more. We have basically had a Fortune 500 IT department supporting our business. Only Rackspace can do that."

rackspace®
HOSTING