

APPRIVER OUTSOURCES HOSTING TO RACKSPACE® AND KEEPS ITS FOCUS ON BUILDING BUSINESS

Case Study Synopsis

The founders of AppRiver had a powerful solution for identifying and filtering spam and virus-laden e-mail messages for business customers. But they wanted to be in the business of managing and delivering their service, not managing and maintaining the servers supporting the service. They knew that Rackspace could provide the core services they needed to support their business model—and that by outsourcing their hosting to Rackspace they could focus on building their business and supporting their customers. Today, AppRiver's focus has not shifted: It has built its business to the point where it filters as many as one billion mail messages per day for more than 40,000 customers around the world—and it relies on Rackspace to manage the more than 500 servers that keep its antispam and antivirus filters running around the clock.

The Situation:

In 2002, as it was becoming abundantly apparent that the virtual arteries of the Internet were soon to be blocked by spam, the founders of AppRiver embarked on an ambitious mission: Become a price/performance leader in the e-mail security industry by offering an affordable service that would filter out spam, mail-born viruses, Trojan horses, and the like from a customer's incoming mail stream—before it arrived at the company's mail server, let alone an end user's inbox. AppRiver had the expertise to build the filtering applications; it had the sales and marketing people who could promote the vision, cultivate strong customer relationships and sell the services. What it did not have was a data center or an operations team that could ensure uninterrupted network connectivity, server integrity and rapid response to service requests on a round-the-clock basis. Nor did it want such things.

What AppRiver's founders wanted was to deliver an easy-to-use, effective and affordable service that would protect clients from troublesome e-mail invasions—and to outsource those aspects of the business that fell outside this goal. Rather than hiring and training a staff to maintain a data center on a 24x7 basis, AppRiver founders wanted to focus on hiring experts in spam and virus analytics, and build up a core technical support team.

The question for AppRiver's founders was never whether to outsource the day-to-day tasks of administering and maintaining a data center. They knew they could not operate a data center with the same level of efficiency as a hosting service provider, and any attempt to do so would simply increase the cost of delivering the service, which would go against the core price/performance business model. The question was which service provider they could trust to deliver the level of availability, service and support that the AppRiver business model required.

"I knew from previous experience that Rackspace always shows up on the compilations of well-regarded, trusted service providers," says Joel Smith, an AppRiver cofounder and its Chief Technical Officer (CTO). "So we decided to give them a try."

Profile

Based in Gulf Breeze, Florida, AppRiver provides e-mail security services. Its powerful spam and virus detection services scan a customer's inbound e-mail and help eliminate spam and virus-laden messages before they arrive in a user's inbox.

Situation

AppRiver executives knew that the proper delivery of services depended on a reliable system and network infrastructure. However, they also knew that staffing, managing and maintaining such an infrastructure themselves would raise costs, which did not fit into their plan for offering an affordable, high-performance solution.

Solution

AppRiver turned to the experts at Rackspace to provide the systems and services required by the servers that support the spam and virus detection services.

Benefits

- Cost-effective round-the-clock Fanatical Support®
- Significantly lower operations costs
- Outsourced services that enable rapid business expansion

"The proactive approach that Rackspace takes to managing our servers is an incredible benefit."

Joel Smith - CTO, AppRiver

experience *fanatical support*®

Toll Free: 1.800.961.2888 | International: 1.210.312.4700 | www.rackspace.com

Copyright © 2008 Rackspace Hosting, Inc. | All trademarks, service marks, images, products and brands remain the sole property of their respective holders. | MODIFIED DATE: 05302008
RACKSPACE® HOSTING | 9725 DATAPoint DRIVE | SAN ANTONIO, TX 78229 U.S.A.



The Solution:

AppRiver's antispam and antivirus services are relatively simple in their execution. When a customer subscribes to a service, AppRiver begins to intercept all mail bound for the customer's mail server. AppRiver's SpamLab™ system scans all the inbound mail for traces of spam and viruses, and then passes all the uninfected, nonspam messages to the customer's mail server, where they are distributed to the appropriate end-user inboxes.

What is simple conceptually, however, is more complicated in actuality. AppRiver and Rackspace have worked together closely to create precisely the server configuration that best supports this activity. "I had the solution all figured out when I first met with Rackspace," says Smith, "but after running the software for a while and seeing how it was working, we realized we needed to make some changes. Rackspace worked closely with us to develop the server configuration that was just right for our needs."

Initially, AppRiver required only a few servers—which have come to be known as AppRiver Specials—to support its service. Today, AppRiver relies on well over 500 AppRiver Specials to deliver its service. On any given day, AppRiver's systems filters as many as one billion mail messages for more than 40,000 customers around the world.

"The growth of AppRiver has been exciting to watch," says Graham Weston, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Rackspace. "Early on, the founders realized the price and performance benefits of outsourcing nonstrategic areas of their business. It was important for them to focus on their core competencies and put their infrastructure in the hands of a trusted partner. By trusting Rackspace to manage the infrastructure, AppRiver had time to develop the heart of their company: unyielding performance and quality customer support. Their model is enabling them to carve out a leadership position in the e-mail security market."

The Teeth of the AppRiver Service: SpamLab

AppRiver's SpamLab™ system relies on the interaction of several integrated proprietary applications. Its virus detection engine was developed internally, but it works with a variety of virus signature descriptors. It relies on three different virus signature lists because each security vendor updates its virus signature lists at different times—and a new signature may appear on one list hours or even days before it appears on another. By relying on three separate lists, AppRiver increases the likelihood that it will be able to protect its clients well in advance of any major virus outbreaks.

Similarly, AppRiver's spam detection engine is internally built and relies on more than 60 types of spam filtering techniques—so it quickly stymies the efforts of spammers. Moreover, because AppRiver is scanning so much mail for so many clients, its systems are quick to detect new spam campaigns. "We can write a signature within a few minutes to block mail from spammers," says Smith.

The Benefits

For AppRiver, the managed service model is a perfect fit. Rackspace ensures the network availability and system uptime required by AppRiver's applications (which filter incoming mail on a 24x7 basis). The Rackspace Fanatical Support team provides the resources that make it easy for AppRiver to expand its system configuration quickly in response to new business.

Nonstop Support for Nonstop Businesses

Spam never sleeps, so neither do the filtering systems at AppRiver. For that reason, AppRiver executives knew they would need a service provider that could ensure uninterrupted network and server availability. With a history of 100% network availability that stretches back more than two years and the Fanatical Support commitment to customer service, Rackspace has been able to meet AppRiver's needs in this area easily.

"By outsourcing our infrastructure to Rackspace, we are able to meet the needs of our continually increasing customer base without changing our cost structure or sacrificing performance."

Michael Murdoch - President & CEO, AppRiver

Designing the Solution That Meets Customer Needs

"Their proactive approach to managing our multitude of servers is an incredible benefit," says Smith. "They were very helpful when it came to creating our AppRiver Specials, and they've helped us in other areas, too. We required an upscale routing and load-balancing configuration for our service. Over the course of two weeks, Rackspace worked closely with Cisco and with us to produce the configuration that met this essential need."

Enabling Rapid Business Expansion

For AppRiver, one of the biggest benefits of outsourcing its infrastructure to Rackspace is the fact that it allows AppRiver to convert a high percentage of its efforts directly into customer value. "It's important to us to squeeze as much performance as possible out of every dollar our clients exchange for our service," says Michael Murdoch, AppRiver's President and CEO. "Our relationship with Rackspace has enabled us to increase the support and service we offer our clients without scaling up our costs. We have grown more quickly than expected, which is never a complaint but can be difficult to manage. By outsourcing our infrastructure to Rackspace, we are able to meet the needs of our continually increasing customer base without changing our cost structure or sacrificing performance."

experience *fanatical support*®

Toll Free: 1.800.961.2888 | International: 1.210.312.4700 | www.rackspace.com

Copyright © 2008 Rackspace Hosting, Inc. | All trademarks, service marks, images, products and brands remain the sole property of their respective holders. | MODIFIED DATE: 05302008
RACKSPACE® HOSTING | 9725 DATAPoint DRIVE | SAN ANTONIO, TX 78229 U.S.A.



AppRiver's ability to expand as quickly as it has is not just a consequence of Rackspace providing the round-the-clock data center personnel. It's also the result of relying on Rackspace to provide virtually every aspect of the data center and infrastructure supporting AppRiver's software.

"Having Rackspace in the picture takes an incredible factor off the table," says Smith. "As we grow, we don't have to think about things like power consumption or battery backups—all the details that we'd have to factor into the equation if we were trying to expand our business while managing all these systems ourselves. All we have to do is concentrate on our applications, making them better than ever to suit our customers—for we know Rackspace is going to hold up their end of the bargain."

For AppRiver, the logic of working with Rackspace remains, even after two and a half years, irrefutable. "If you really like experimenting with your own equipment, taking servers down and putting them back up, good for you," says Smith. "But if you want to stay focused, hand all that off to Rackspace and be done with it. It would take millions of dollars and years of personnel time to create what Rackspace has already done, so why not just hop on that bandwagon and do it?"

"We work with customers in many time zones, and it's important that we're able to support them 24x7. We can call Rackspace at 2 A.M. on Christmas morning—which happened once—and they're there." Joel Smith, CTO, AppRiver

"If you really like experimenting with your own equipment, taking servers down and putting them back up, good for you. But if you want to stay focused, hand all that off to Rackspace and be done with it."

Joel Smith - CTO, AppRiver



For more information about Appriver, visit:
www.appriver.com

experience *fanatical support*®

Toll Free: 1.800.961.2888 | International: 1.210.312.4700 | www.rackspace.com

Copyright © 2008 Rackspace Hosting, Inc. | All trademarks, service marks, images, products and brands remain the sole property of their respective holders. | MODIFIED DATE: 05302008

RACKSPACE® HOSTING | 9725 DATAPOINT DRIVE | SAN ANTONIO, TX 78229 U.S.A.

