



APOLLO HOSTING GAINS RED HAT STABILITY

Web hosting company improves quality of service

FAST FACTS

Industry:	Website hosting
Geography:	Austin, Texas
Opportunity:	To gain better control over system availability and provide consistently high quality of service to a growing customer base
Solution:	150 Dell servers running Red Hat Enterprise Linux
Software:	Red Hat® Enterprise Linux®
Applications:	Roaring Penguin CanIt-PRO
Hardware:	Dell 860s to Dell 2950s
Benefits:	Increased uptime to 99.999% availability, optimized IT resources, and provided scalability required for datacenter growth

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1999, Apollo Hosting is an award-winning web hosting company whose services and packages consistently receive the highest rankings in the industry. The company uniquely offers total hosting solutions that enable customers to build, market, and maintain their websites, whether they contain a few simple informational pages or require the most complex e-commerce capabilities. Dedicated to providing the best levels of support to its customers, Apollo was one of the first hosting companies to offer 24/7/365 Live Technical Support Chat and toll-free phone support. With so much to offer, it's no surprise that this privately-owned, Austin-based company began turning a profit since its inception. Today, Apollo Hosting services 30,000 customers worldwide.

OPPORTUNITY

For a growing web hosting company like Apollo Hosting, providing stable servers is critical to business success. As a young enterprise, Apollo

first relied on other companies' datacenters for its servers. "We worked with Alabanza in Baltimore and then with another company in Canada," said Don McLeman, Vice President of Operations for Apollo Hosting. To better control the quality of service it could provide to its rapidly growing customer base, Apollo decided it needed to host its own servers. "Downtime is a web host's worst enemy. When a server experiences downtime in a shared environment, several hundred users can be affected instantly. We wanted more control over server reliability, so we began to look for our own solution," said McLeman. Apollo required a highly stable platform that could support a datacenter running a large number of websites.

SOLUTION

To find the right server solution, Apollo evaluated several Linux platforms. According to McLeman, "We tried Slackware, Debian, and Fedora, and also looked at running Windows 2003 with Apache." But driver support was lacking, and Apollo realized that none of the solutions offered the type of support Red Hat could provide. "We chose Red Hat Enterprise Linux for the simple fact that it is the most thoroughly developed and widely supported Linux brand available." In addition to Red Hat's unmatched support, Apollo chose the solution for its stability and ease of implementation.



With little training, Apollo was able get its new Red Hat system up and running within a month. "Red Hat was really easy to implement and most of our engineers are self-taught on the system. Red Hat support responds to our questions quickly, offering us several variations to look for when problems occur. Plus, there is such a large online knowledge base for Red Hat that we can always find the solutions ourselves," McLeman said. Today, 150 Dell servers run Red Hat Enterprise Linux to service 9,000 customers and 25,000 accounts. "We've been up and running since 2004, and we've received absolutely no complaints. Thanks to Red Hat, uptime is 99.999%," said McLeman.

To provide spam and virus protection to its customers, Apollo chose to work with Red Hat Ready ISV partner, Roaring Penguin. "After trying other vendors, who had trouble understanding the security and load requirements of a web hosting company, we stumbled across Roaring Penguin in an email message we'd received," said McLeman. Roaring Penguin's antispam software is fully customizable and runs seamlessly on the Red Hat Enterprise Linux platform.

BENEFITS

Red Hat provided Apollo Hosting with the availability it requires to provide consistently high quality of service to its growing customer base. "Our customers range from 'mom and pop' businesses to large companies, and they all need high availability. No one can afford downtime," said McLeman. Using Red Hat has also given the company a competitive edge in the market. "With Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers, there are significantly less operating system issues. Nine times out of ten, the problems we encounter are at the hardware level, such as a memory issue we can easily resolve. Greater uptime puts us ahead of our competitors," he said.

Apollo can best measure its system performance, sales, and resource savings when comparing Red Hat to Microsoft. The company recently added a Windows platform to expand its

offerings and accommodate those customers specifically requesting the system. Within five months of offering the platform, however, Apollo has only opened 150 accounts on the Windows server. "Red Hat outperforms Windows hands down. When we tested the load capabilities of Windows against Red Hat Enterprise Linux, we found that the Red Hat server could handle 1,000 clients easily and with 99.999% uptime. The Windows server, on the other hand, performed significantly worse, supporting half the number of clients. And it was nowhere near as stable as Red Hat," said McLeman.

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- Don McLeman, Vice President of Operations, Apollo Hosting

As a result of implementing Red Hat, Apollo optimized its resources significantly, streamlining system administration and programming time. "Now we install Red Hat from a Flash USB drive and have it up and running within 30 minutes. We no longer need to have system engineers working 24/7. Red Hat has made maintenance really easy, decreasing the need to interface with customers on technical issues," said McLeman. The company is also in the process of developing a centralized id system that automatically serves customers the right level of support according to their account types. "It's taken us less than a month to program this database on the Red Hat Enterprise Linux platform. It would take six months to a year to program the same system on a Windows platform. Plus we'd need to find one or several people who have specialized Windows knowledge, costing between \$150,000 and \$300,000," said McLeman.

Apollo plans to continue using Red Hat applications and support to continue improving its systems and service offerings in the future. As a result of the platform's excellent performance, the company intends to add 30 more Red Hat servers by the end of Q2 2007. "These days, hosting companies are a dime-a-dozen. We've been in this business eight years, and it's nice to work with a company like Red Hat that enables us to provide outstanding service to all of our customers," McLeman said.

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USA/Canada
1-888-REDHAT1
1-866-273-3428 X44555
sales@redhat.com

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