



Small Business Case Study

Intel® Xeon® processor technology and
Intel® Centrino® mobile technology
Size of Company: 1-25 employees



Intel® makes BrickHost rock solid

Case Summary

Having outgrown its original hosted server farm where it resold server space, BrickHost needed to provide reliable server space to its growing list of global clients. With the company's reputation staked on the quality of its servers, BrickHost relies on servers with Intel® Xeon® processor technology as well as Intel® Centrino® mobile technology-based notebooks for flexibility.

Challenge

BrickHost's founders saw the opportunity to enhance the services, features and interfaces they provided to global web hosting customers and launched their business from rented offices in downtown Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Using two computers and reselling third-party server space, BrickHost started building their search engine ranking and spent time helping other companies understand how to leverage the Web for business. Shortly after signing its first clients, BrickHost expanded its service offering to include e-commerce, offsite data backup, web design and development, and web hosting.

"Companies want to attract more visitors to their site and ensure they return regularly," said BrickHost CEO Andrew Campbell, adding that business growth was spurred by customers' desire to add more functionality to static Web sites including e-commerce, online registration or live chat.

As the company grew, the bandwidth and server requirements also grew exponentially. The company experienced further growth when it expanded its hosting options to include both Microsoft Windows* and Linux* platforms. Originally re-selling server space from a company in New York City, BrickHost quickly outgrew their offerings and needed to increase the hands-on management of their clients' data, Web sites and e-mail.



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Solutions

Today, BrickHost boasts more than 30,000 customers automating large portions of its business to ensure ongoing quality service and customer support. The company also needed a more flexible hosting solution to continue future growth as well as providing lower maintenance costs, increased uptime and the opportunity for BrickHost to offer new services seamlessly to clients.

“BrickHost will only use top-quality products for our clients and I know you get what you pay for,” said Campbell. “We looked at all the options when we started the business and by choosing Intel® processor technology, we received outstanding performance, proven dependability, and room to grow as our business expands. On the server end, it was a no-brainer to choose servers with Intel® Xeon® processor technology.”

“Clients specifically look for Intel® processors when choosing their services,” said Campbell, adding that they’d lose clients if they chose any other processor. Hyper-Threading Technology (HT Technology) also allows BrickHost to deliver the performance it needs for multitasking, multi-threaded applications and heavy workloads.

Campbell admits to being biased. He has tried other processors in the past but came back to Intel® processor-based technology for its dependability. “When serving our clients, I am only comfortable providing them with high quality processors. Our business is essentially renting processors and we’ll only rent Intel®. Everything we do depends on our servers, workstations and notebooks and we rely on Intel®.”

In addition to upgrading the servers in its co-location facilities in Orlando and Dallas, BrickHost needed to upgrade its office infrastructure in Thunder Bay. This included moving to a commercial-grade router to handle the transmission requirements of their growing staff and investing in network-attached storage devices. The final evolution was to install local servers to centralize their office files, and a router capable of handling multiple broadband connections for connection spanning.

At the desktop level, BrickHost is using Dual-Core Intel® Xeon® processor-based workstations. “They’re amazing for rendering 3D models and for computer-intensive graphics,” he said, adding that for mobility they have chosen to use notebooks with Intel® Centrino® mobile technology to allow for the flexibility to work remotely via wireless networks.

Key Advantages

For BrickHost, ensuring their clients have reliable access is critical. Since business on the Web operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, BrickHost needed flexibility to conduct routine maintenance without impacting clients, as well as guaranteeing high levels of uptime.

“Intel® processors and boards are rock solid,” said Campbell. “To respond to demand for our service, we are adding Intel® Itanium® 2 processor-based servers. We are thrilled with their performance.”

Backups Made Simple

For all businesses, access to corporate data is mission critical. Unfortunately many companies



don't do regular backups, or don't remember to take backups off-site which can be devastating after a flood, fire, malicious act or natural disaster. Campbell found that even some businesses who were doing regular backups and taking them offsite had never verified the data, so when a recovery was attempted, they found out the data was corrupt and their information was lost.

BrickHost developed Sentinel®, a software solution to allow businesses to easily back up corporate data to BrickHost's off-site secure servers with Intel® Xeon® processor technology. Complete with an archiving feature to allow a business to maintain one week of daily backups, companies using Sentinel® can recover data even if the information was lost on Monday but the data loss was only discovered on Thursday.

For companies relying on BrickHost to maintain the integrity of their data, BrickHost needs to ensure its hardware is solid and so relies heavily on its Intel® processor technology.

Brickhost: Automated Services Save Time

While the company had a lot of manual processes when it was founded, Campbell realized they had to automate even more time-consuming standard tasks, such as support for routine issues and payment processing, if they were going to manage company growth.

"Automation is now saving our firm in excess of \$3500 a month. By automating account creation, billing reminders and improving our account tracking software, we've been able to reduce our accounting costs across the board, and our staff now spends a fraction of the time activating and updating accounts compared to 2004," said Campbell, noting that effective automation requires a solid network infrastructure.

Web site development clients have also benefited from the automated systems built by BrickHost. The Conference Planner, a Thunder Bay-based event planning agency, now accepts registrations online. "Moving event registration online saves our firm a significant amount of money on data entry, and automation allows administrative staff and clients to view an up-to-date account of registrants which improves event management, accounting and overall planning," said owner Penny Hunt.

For the Thunder Bay Soccerplex, BrickHost kicked off an online soccer schedule and ranking system that allows parents and players to check the Web site instead of calling the Soccerplex weekly, which saves time and staffing costs.

Counselling Support Online

BrickHost is using web-based solutions to help another client, the Behavioural Sciences Centre, expand the services they offer to their clients. The Behavioural Sciences Centre is a profit centre for St. Joseph's Care Group in Thunder Bay, where private sector companies can arrange for wellness counselling and intervention for their employees and families. Walter Martin, Manager of the Behavioural Sciences Centre, wanted to develop an online counselling service

through which clients can pose a question about a specific issue and receive a confidential reply within a very short period of time.

In addition to providing a more accessible service for clients, Martin said the Centre can now aggregate its data to identify trends or issues that should be addressed by a particular company. With the Web site being hosted in BrickHost's secure data centre and powered by Intel® Xeon® processor technology, the Centre is assured of client confidentiality as well as service reliability while expanding the reach of services to more areas where face-to-face sessions are impossible, such as remote mine sites.

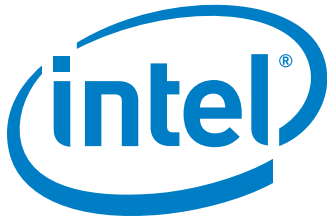
"Security is of paramount concern to us and our clients," said Martin. "We want to work with a company experienced in providing security. With BrickHost, all of our communications are encrypted and we can protect client privacy while capturing aggregated data to analyze trends and issues for the employers who contract our services."

Wireless Flexibility

Since 2004, BrickHost has doubled in size and to accommodate its growth the company installed a wireless LAN in the office and in the homes of key staff members. Wireless technologies allow staff to respond quickly to clients, which is a real asset in BrickHost's business and has helped them build the client base they enjoy today. By logging into the corporate LAN over a virtual private network (VPN) connection, Campbell and other BrickHost staff can respond to client questions, or check on concerns using wireless notebook with Intel® Centrino® mobile technology.

"It's very convenient, especially when you're trying to help a client in the middle of the night who has an emergency," said Campbell, adding that the company selected their Dell* and Sony* ultralight notebooks because of their reliability, and their easy of connectivity to wireless networks with Intel® Centrino® mobile technology.

"With a wireless network covering our conference rooms, people who bring notebooks into the office can instantly connect and be productive," he said, adding that they often bring in contractors for specific projects and having the ability to allow people to start work quickly, without needing to cable a new workstation, is a real benefit. "BrickHost benefits from just-in-time scalability," he said.



Future Uses

As BrickHost continues to grow, Campbell is focused on ensuring that their "growth doesn't get out of hand" and that they can continue to provide rock-solid service, backup software solutions and levels of support that have led to their success to date.

BrickHost is planning to implement servers with Intel® Itanium® 2 processor technology to continue building a solid infrastructure to handle the new services they are phasing in for clients, including improved web design and development services, upgraded Sentinel® backup software, as well as further enhancements to content management solutions including photo management, e-commerce and customer service systems.

Find out more about a business solution that is right for your company by contacting your Intel® representative, or visit the Intel® Business Enterprise Web site at intel.ca/business or its industry solutions specific sites at intel.ca/business/bss/industry.

Links

BrickHost
<http://www.brickhost.com>

The Conference Planner
<http://www.theconferenceplanner.ca>

Thunder Bay Soccer Plex
<http://www.soccerplex.ca>

St. Joseph's Care Group
<http://www.sjcg.net>



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