

Hosting Pioneer Grows Business and Improves Service by Automating with Parallels Business Automation - Standard



Situation

In early 2003, eApps had established a successful hosting business and was about to enroll its 1,000th hosting customer. Although eApps welcomed the growth, the resulting strain on its support staff was limiting growth. eApps needed to continue growing without reducing the quality of service provided to its customers.

Application Development to Hosting

eApps began in 1986 as an application development company. While developing on the Lotus Notes platform, eApps learned that its clients wanted help running the applications after they were developed. To fill this need, eApps began hosting Notes applications in its own data center on behalf of its customers.

As a hosting pioneer, eApps development expertise quickly turned to the Internet so its clients could access the hosted applications using browser based technology. eApps gained expertise in Java and open source programming.

eApps continued to grow its hosting business by providing fast, efficient, phone assisted customer service. In addition, eApps differentiated itself by providing clients with VPS hosting, a suite of unique application packages, and controlled security patches. The growth of the hosting business superseded expectations, and in July 2003, eApps hosting revenues exceeded revenues from professional services.

However, growth also created issues. According to Rick Lingsch, CEO of eApps, "Billing and technical support was insanity. The hosting model could not grow without a fully automated infrastructure." With this understanding, eApps began to investigate solutions to its infrastructure and process needs.

Solution

eApps selected Parallels Business Automation - Standard as its hosting automation platform - twice. In early 2003, eApps concluded that Parallels Business Automation - Standard met the requirements, but continued using in house solutions while making the business case for Parallels Business Automation - Standard. eApps uses very high end servers, so the processing based licensing fees were problematic for their growing business. Again in early 2004, eApps decided on Parallels Business Automation - Standard and made the purchase based on an account-based licensing model.

Customer and Partner

For eApps, Parallels Business Automation - Standard was more than a software package, it was a solution for managing its entire hosting business. Parallels Business Automation - Standard would need to replace three existing billing solutions, provide customer self-service, and automate several existing manual processes.

eApps worked together with Parallels's team of knowledgeable professionals to install and customize Parallels Business Automation - Standard. As unique business requirements were discovered, eApps and Parallels worked together to ensure success.

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Benefits

- Grew business to over 2,000 virtual environments without over-loading support staff.
- Improved upgrade process and increased revenue per customer.
- Satisfied customers by delivering a user friendly control panel.

"We bet our business on Parallels Business Automation - Standard. When we turned on the system, we turned everything else off."

— Barry Deutsch,
COO, eApps

System Consolidation

Parallels Business Automation - Standard helped eApps consolidate three other billing systems and several manual processes into a single automated solution. The customer control panels allow customers to log in once to manage all of their online services.

Benefits

Service Upgrades

eApps offers nine different hosting plans so customers can choose the features and resources that meet their needs and their budget.

A key part of the eApps business plan involves enrolling customers and migrating them to higher-end plans as their business grows. As many as 25% of the eApps customers add resources or upgrade their plan in the first year of service.

Parallels Business Automation - Standard automated the customer upgrade process so customers can quickly and easily upgrade their service online. By presenting the upgrade options and capturing the order online, eApps users were able to immediately act upon purchasing decisions. This helped eApps increase revenues while satisfying customers.

eApps's customer, CouponMom.com, epitomizes this process. The Coupon Mom started as a small informational site on a very basic hosting plan. As the web site became popular and grew on a national level, The Coupon Mom migrated to more advanced hosting plans that provided additional resources as well as features such as visitor registration to improve the user experience.



Using Parallels Business Automation - Standard, eApps provided the infrastructure to help The Coupon Mom expand as her web site became more and more popular. "The online control panel made the upgrade process fast and easy," said Stephanie Nelson, Owner of The Coupon Mom website. "When we needed to upgrade our plan, we ordered online without worrying about migration or server configuration issues."

Integrated Automation and VPS

Parallels provides eApps with both automation and virtualization services through its Parallels Virtuozzo Containers and Parallels Business Automation - Standard products. The tight integration simplified VPS hosting management for eApps.

Service Upgrades

eApps has been able to cultivate a large customer base by offering entry level hosting plans and encouraging upgrades as their business grows. Parallels Business Automation - Standard automates plan changes and helps eApps market higher end services directly through the customer control panel.

Enhanced Support

Parallels Business Automation - Standard allowed eApps to spend less time answering routine questions and more time providing highly technical customer service. As a result, eApps is able to resolve complex issues quickly. This allowed eApps to acquire several software development companies as customers.

Parallels Business Automation - Standard Demo

To view an online demonstration of Parallels Business Automation - Standard, visit the Parallels web site:

<http://www.parallels.com/hspcomplete/demo>

Support Benefits

Prior to implementing Parallels Business Automation - Standard, eApps support staff spent a considerable amount of time answering routine questions, performing routine configurations, and managing the billing process. After the implementation, the eApps support staff had more time to provide top-tier customer service by answering complex questions from development teams who host their application and test environments at eApps.

“Prior to Parallels Business Automation - Standard, we spent a lot of time provisioning accounts,” said Brady Kern, CTO of eApps. “With Parallels Business Automation - Standard’s automatic provisioning, we have more time to spend on important things, like enhancing the performance and security of our network.”

Parallels Business Automation - Standard helps eApps better utilize its technical resources. By spending less time answering routine questions and performing routine tasks, the highly technical support staff could focus on new technologies and provide eApps customers with a technical edge.

New Applications and New Revenue

Although focused on hosting, eApps continues to innovate by developing application packages that are customized to a particular web hosting audience. Parallels Business Automation - Standard provides the flexibility for eApps to continue adding application packages that are carefully tested for stability and security.

Conclusion

June 9, 2004 marked a successful Parallels Business Automation - Standard deployment as well as the successful transformation of eApps into a world leader in the hosting business.

The transformation of eApps provides a model for how strong management can successfully transform a company. eApps was able to utilize its application development skills to take advantage of the market opportunity presented by web hosting. As the business grew, eApps called upon Parallels to simplify the operational aspects of web hosting.

By migrating from multiple systems and manual processes to a fully automated Parallels Business Automation - Standard solution, eApps was able to better manage its business. Cost savings, improved customer satisfaction, and increased revenue per account were all direct results of the Parallels / eApps partnership.

Learn more at www.parallels.com/hspcomplete

For More Information

Contact Parallels

For more information about Parallels products and services, call Parallels Hosting Sales at +1 (703) 995-4102. Outside the United States and Canada, please contact your local Parallels sales office.

Contact eApps

For more information about eApps, call +1 (770) 448-2100.

To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.eapps.com



660 SW 39th Street
Suite 205
Renton, WA 98057
USA
Main +1 425 282 6400
Fax +1 425 282 6444

13755 Sunrise Valley Drive
Suite 600
Herndon, VA 20171
USA
Main +1 703 815 5670
Fax +1 703 815 5675

www.parallels.com