

Parallels® Automation

Customer Success Story

IceWEB Automates with Parallels Automation to Improve Small Business Email Offering

“The days of manual mailbox provisioning have gone by the wayside. Service providers and ISPs that provision accounts manually will not be able to grow and scale their business.”

— James Bond, CTO, IceWEB

Business Summary

IceWEB is a managed service provider which offers a full line of hosting and consulting services, including business class email (IceMAIL) and collaborative portal services (IceVISTA).

IceWEB has traditionally built and managed large network and email deployments for large government organizations and has now brought this expertise to serve the needs of smaller businesses. IceWEB's hosting services benefit smaller businesses by providing enterprise class features without the expense of owning and maintaining in-house servers.

The screenshot shows the IceMAIL website interface. At the top, there's a navigation menu with icons for shopping cart, home, mail, refresh, and user profile. Below the navigation, the main heading is "Enterprise Class Email and Collaboration for Small Business". A list of features includes: Shared Calendars, Contacts, Folders and More; Includes Microsoft Outlook Software; Use Your Existing or New Domain Name; Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam Protection; Cellular / PDA Synchronization; 24 x 7 Emergency Support; 100% US Owned and Operated; Tier-One Data Center With Redundant Internet Providers. A banner below lists benefits: No contract, No software to update, Low monthly fee, No IT support costs. Further down, there are sections for "IceMAIL BUNDLES" with icons for various services, a "60 Day Money Back Guarantee" badge, and a "COMPARE ICEMAIL" section with a "FREE" badge for Microsoft SharePoint.

In order to be profitable while serving the needs of small business customers, IceWEB operates a fully automated infrastructure so customers can order and manage their services online.

IceWEB still has a full Customer Service department but customers now have the ability to manage their account and billing information online without having to call.



IceWEB provides a full line of hosting and consulting services but specializes in enterprise email and web portal hosting. IceWEB has two flagship products – IceMAIL for business email and IceVISTA for collaborative web portals.

Business Situation

After gaining experience in serving the email and collaboration needs of large government organizations, IceWEB set out to help smaller organizations enjoy the same benefits through a hosted services offering. IceWEB began to offer the service and realized that additional automation was necessary to meet the price and support requirements of smaller sized businesses.

Solution

IceWEB selected Parallels Automation to automate the business processes associated with the IceMAIL product. Parallels Automation delivered a pre-integrated solution for customer enrollment, provisioning, billing, and maintenance. The solution helped IceWEB deliver business class email services to companies who did not want to install and maintain their own solution.

IceWEB selected Parallels Automation as a critical component of their automated infrastructure because Parallels Automation delivered a single integrated system with an online storefront, billing system, customer control panels, and fraud management. IceWEB plans to use Parallels Automation's application programming interface (API) to integrate and launch several more service offerings in the near future.

Situation

In early 2000, IceWEB built and managed internal email deployments for large government organizations. While doing this work, IceWEB acquired a detailed knowledge of business class email systems as it deployed systems of up to 20,000 mailboxes.

IceWEB realized that the needs of small and medium sized businesses were similar to those of large organizations. Small businesses wanted their own domains with shared calendaring, secure remote access, distribution lists, mobile access, and 100% uptime, but were unwilling to pay \$10k - \$25k to set up servers and hire additional IT staff members to maintain the solution.

In late 2005, IceWEB launched its IceMAIL product to provide advanced email features to small business customers for an affordable monthly fee. By spreading the costs over a large customer base and simplifying support, IceMAIL could deliver business class features at a price that small businesses are willing to pay.

Using Microsoft Hosted Exchange

IceWEB selected Microsoft Hosted Exchange as the delivery platform for its business class email service. Hosted Exchange included all required features including secure remote access from mobile devices as well as the popular Microsoft Outlook client.

Microsoft's Hosted Messaging and Collaboration (HMC) platform delivered a scalable multi-tenant architecture with the monitoring and reporting features that were required to launch IceMAIL. However, IceWEB wanted to enhance and automate several processes, including the storefront, provisioning, customer self-management, and billing.

The option of implementing all of these processes manually would limit growth, increase costs, and reduce customer satisfaction with IceMAIL.

Solution

IceWEB investigated several "control panel" solutions for the Hosted Exchange platform which provided customer self-service through a web browser. Most of these solutions required IceWEB to purchase additional software to have an integrated online storefront and mechanized billing system.

"Several solutions we investigated were simply enhanced versions of Microsoft's toolkit," claims James Bond, CTO at IceWEB. "Parallels Automation was the only solution which delivered an integrated package with a storefront, control panels, billing software, and business logic."

Parallels Automation delivered a solution with all of the functionality required to manage and run a hosting business. Equally as important, Parallels Automation includes a well documented API so IceWEB can continue to launch new services and customize its platform.

Parallels Automation Benefits

- Provided an integrated package with customer ordering, billing, monitoring, and customer self-maintenance.
- Provided an intuitive interface for small business customers who did not have a detailed knowledge of managing an Exchange server.
- Delivers the flexibility to add new customers, new services, and new service plans as IceWEB continues to grow.

"Parallels Automation allowed us to automate and brand all of the Hosted Messaging and Collaboration features."

— Stacy Dinter,
Director of Marketing,
IceWEB

Future Plans and Services

By selecting PEM and HMC, IceWEB acquired an infrastructure which can scale in size and functionality. Together, Parallels and IceWEB will continue to work as partners to add features.

The two companies already automate the delivery of wireless devices and mobile email services from the IceMAIL storefront. James Bond, IceWEB's Chief Technology Officer, envisions a storefront where customers can not only order email services with wireless access, but have all of their other products and services such as web portals, DSL/T1, and domains automatically provisioned and delivered. With the infrastructure already in place, PEM makes it easy to add services such as shared web hosting, virtual servers, dedicated servers, and value added applications to existing offerings.

Benefits

Ease of Use

Some businesses continue to utilize free web mail as their primary email address because they are put off by the complexity of purchasing, installing, and managing business class email. Unfortunately, small businesses that give their clients a web mail address send the wrong message – it implies that their company is small and not well established.

IceWEB utilizes PEM to make it easy for non-tech savvy businesses to go to a web site, purchase a domain name for their company and link it to business class email. IceWEB also helps customers tie their email service to a mobile device, so they can have anytime, anywhere email for a modest monthly fee.

PEM Demo

To view the online documentation for PEM, visit the Parallels web site:

www.parallels.com/pem

ICEWEB
IceWEB Online Order Processing

Select Your Mail Options Select Your Domain Checkout

Description	Period/Qty	Discount	Price	
Hosting: Standard Mailbox	1 Month(s)	\$0.00	\$9.95	Remove Modify
Total:			\$9.95	

Configuration Settings: Standard Mailbox

Secure Elements, a leader in enterprise vulnerability management and compliance risk reduction solutions, automates security remediation strategies and tactics across the entire enterprise, reducing business risk and IT management costs while improving systems performance and maintaining business continuity. Ned Miller, President and CEO of Secure Elements stated, "Since we've been experiencing rapid growth during the past few years, we've begun to evaluate outsourcing non-core functions. After a thorough review of the market and associated offerings, IceWEB's offerings were the clear choice for best all round value."

Support Benefits

Prior to implementing Parallels Automation, IceWEB spent a considerable time and resources performing manual tasks and troubleshooting customer support concerns. After implementing Parallels Automation, IceWEB was able to automate order entry, billing, and customer support – freeing engineers to focus on innovation.

New Applications and New Revenue

Although focused on email and collaboration, IceWEB continues to innovate and deliver new service offerings. Parallels Automation is flexible enough to grow with IceWEB as it deploys hosting services and other applications in the near future.

Parallels Automation's flexibility provides a method to migrate customers from in-house solutions as well as several other common platforms. This flexibility is useful as IceWEB grows by acquiring other hosting providers.

Conclusion

Today, enterprise employees enjoy the benefits of business class email - including shared calendaring, shared contacts, reliable service, and secure remote/mobile access. Millions of small business employees demand these same services but cannot afford the cost of building and maintaining a robust internal email solution.

Hosted messaging platforms, such as IceMAIL, provide an effective way for small businesses to enjoy large enterprise features with minimal upfront costs and minimal maintenance. IceMAIL utilizes the Hosted Messaging and Collaboration (HMC) platform from Microsoft and the Parallels Automation solution from Parallels to deliver a robust email solution targeted towards small and medium sized businesses.

Parallels Automation automates all aspects of the IceWEB offering - from online ordering to provisioning and billing. Web-based forms simplify the complexities of managing hosted email so non-technical users can administer their services through intuitive web-based forms. This helps IceWEB control their cost of providing service.

Together, IceWEB and Parallels have combined to deliver a robust email offering. The two companies will continue to work together to deliver new and innovative services using the flexible platform that they have deployed.

Learn more at www.parallels.com/pem

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.



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