Open Tech Alliance
Case Study

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Enabling a 24x7 Business Advantage for Self-storage Owners

OpenTech Alliance is the leader in automation and call center services for the self-storage industry. The privately-held company helps storage owners work smarter by increasing productivity, profitability and customer satisfaction with innovative technologies designed from the ground up for the self-storage business. OpenTech Alliance enables self-storage owners to extend services from core office hours to a full 24x7 business model in multiple locations by delivering both the technology (such as self-service kiosks and online rentals) and call center services to over 7000 locations.

"Our automation and call centers deliver business critical services to customers who rely on us to deliver - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Technology is a core part of our business model and it isn't a nice to have, it is what enables revenue generation and the flexibility our customers need." – Dan Scaman, Vice President, Strategic Planning

The technology tipping point: Explosive Growth and Acquisition

After a recent acquisition and high-growth based on superior customer service, OpenTech Alliance struggled to keep up with the load placed upon on-premises servers and the spiky traffic that continued to grow exponentially. As the firefight continued, the instability within the environment and lack of flexibility due to physical infrastructure which caused a primary web property to go down several times. "When the site [or services] goes down we start losing business and it affects the customer experience and bottom line. I had to determine at that point how to make wiser, better choices for the company that would allow us to not only deliver higher redundancy but also support

immediate and future growth requirements." Troy Grissom, IT Director

The volume of data under management continued to grow, supported by incremental daily backups and full backups once a week. As OpenTech Alliance grew, data loss was a key concern and posed an immediate concern for the organization. Grissom shared, "We needed to move to a place where we had nearly live backup and resiliency – so that if we had a disruption we minimize the impact and isolate data lost to just moments versus the full day."

The complex choice becomes simple

Grissom engaged Softchoice's technical team to evaluate potential options including several public cloud providers. Softchoice brought forward an Amazon Web Services (AWS) solution indicating the general scope, key considerations, and constraints. "I worked with Softchoice over the past 16 years with a prior company and I always received very good service not only to find the right technology but with a focus on planning towards the future. Softchoice helped me find a solution that will meet my needs now and into the future." Stated Grissom.

With all data and information consolidated, Grissom was able to speak with the executive team to make the case to move forward with a new way of delivering service through the AWS platform. "We made the choice to move forward with AWS and Softchoice. And, we've never looked back. It's just been a very good technology marriage between OpenTech Alliance and Softchoice. As needs came up, I had immediate access to Keystone and the technical team at Softchoice to be able to assist with upgrades or provisioning additional instances within AWS," shared Grissom.

A high availability, elastic AWS solution to enable customer experience

Working with Softchoice, OpenTech Alliance took an application-centric approach which leveraged a wide variety of AWS services to isolate and support specific application roles. The solution delivers built-in load-balancing, redundancy and uses auto scaling groups to provide scale at a moment's notice.

Softchoice delivered a solution addressing the unique requirements of both the applications, users and elastic demands. The solution was built within a Virtual Private Cloud that takes advantage of 2 separate availability zones across two regions to support both load, security and availability requirements.

The solution was designed to survive multiple points of failure by mirroring the environment across two availability zones. "One advantage to having a hot environment set up in AWS is we are not limited by the physical resources that we have available locally. In the past, the cost of managing multiple redundant data centers would have been out of the question based on cost. Now with AWS it is a reality and expands easily to meet new needs," shared Grissom.

The design included AWS Elastic Load Balancers to throttle the flow of traffic to available resources improving the service responsiveness and further mitigated previous outages.

OpenTech Alliance continues to leverage AWS and plans to continue to move additional workloads into the AWS environment. Building on the existing secure and stable foundation, OpenTech Alliance increases their response time to new corporate requests and applications by 85% in contrast to a previous 45 day traditional on-premises deployment cycle. "We'll continue to move to the cloud not just because of the cost model or the availability but because of the ongoing evolution of the technology that stays current and gives us a competitive advantage as we grow," shares Scaman.

Working with Softchoice's Keystone Managed Services division, OpenTech Alliance has access to certified engineers 24X7 via phone for support issues and for planning cycles in the form of configuration mentorship. OpenTech Alliance also addresses cost management processes through insight delivered through reporting and dashboards provided by Softchoice as the environment grows. "Having data available to me is key. I need it to not only justify what we're doing from a technology standpoint but also for operating the business," stated Grissom.

Results Summary

- Application-centric approach scales immediately with new demand
- Cuts time to market by 85% vs. traditional data center delivery models
- High-availability, redundancy with build in backup strategy

- Protects the customer experience, supporting 24X7 operations
- Ongoing support through Keystone Managed Services

Closing Quote:

"We're only as strong as the weakest link within our vendor support platform and framework to deliver on our mission and long-term vision. Softchoice is doing a great job and you're leading the charge." – **Dan Scaman, Vice President, Strategic Planning**

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