

A CASE STUDY FOR:

SIX FLAGS

KEEPING SIX FLAGS THRILLS LIVELY REQUIRES SMART BEHIND-THE-SCENES TECHNOLOGIES
Rackspace helps international theme park leader improve infrastructure, security and processes.

BUSINESS

Entertainment, theme and amusement parks.

CHALLENGES

Achieve a flexible, state-of-the-art infrastructure to address challenges and match growth; improve performance and availability.

SOLUTION

Dedicated and Cloud Servers, RackConnect, Load Balancers.

OUTCOME

Higher availability, increased security and greater efficiency to deliver greater visitor experiences.





Six Flags Entertainment Corporation is the world's largest regional theme park company with \$1.2 billion in annual sales and 25 million visitors to its 16 parks in the United States, Mexico and Canada. Since 1961, Six Flags has entertained millions of families with rides, water parks and unique attractions, including licensed Looney Tunes and superhero characters from Warner Brothers and DC Entertainment.

The Grand Prairie, Texas-based company chose Rackspace over competing offerings during a 2008 hosting provider search, and they've never looked back.

"We did a number of different reviews of companies and Rackspace came across as a leader in not only managed hosting, but also in support and services, and that was exactly what we were looking for," said Sean Andersen, Six Flags Director of Interactive Services.

THE RIGHT STUFF

The company, which had been hosting content both in-house as well as working with a content delivery network, looked to Rackspace when it was ready to move its infrastructure to a provider that could not only ensure greater uptime, but also handle more than just its website.

"We did an RFP process where we looked at cloud providers, and that was the defining moment for Rackspace as our choice," said Andersen. The review revealed Rackspace to be the clear winner, not only in cost, but also in resources, efficiency, performance and support.

"What was clear was that the costs were in line, as well as the solution," Andersen said. "In fact, the solution mirrored what we were comfortable with in our own data centers, and actually turned out to be something that we not only understood, but also gave us cost efficiency as well as a direction that would allow us to grow."

Having since migrated its entire infrastructure, Six Flags continues to incrementally increase capacity with the help of Rackspace, to match not only growth in the entertainment industry, but also to address Six Flags' emerging needs within an ever-evolving technology environment.

"We see a great advantage with Rackspace," Andersen said. "We don't have to micromanage every single server. Rackspace allows us not only to offload the environment, but also to turn over support and services to them."

INSIDE AN ONLINE VISIT

When a web browser is pointed to SixFlags.com, the visitor hits the Rackspace environment, either within the company's Dallas data center or in the Rackspace Dallas data center.

Clicking through the environment takes a visitor through the Six Flags Drupal environment and Drupal stack—the content management system that Six Flags editors and contributors use to manage their website.

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SEAN ANDERSEN :: Six Flags Director of Interactive Services

"Everything is there, from ticket prices to daily updates, promotional information, rides, park hours and other types of components," Andersen said. "All that content is being driven from the content management system, which is all being powered at Rackspace. A ticket purchase transports a visitor seamlessly to our e-commerce provider who is also hosted at Rackspace."

THE LATEST SECURITY MEASURES

Security is critical for Six Flags as a public corporation. The company does experience a number of denial of service (DDoS) attacks every year—and one that it experienced in 2014 brought down the site temporarily.

"Rackspace was able to direct us to numerous partners that can help against a DDos attack, but more importantly they had two, three clear winners that we were able to engage a contract with, get set up, and then actually deploy and have our site back up and running," said Andersen. "From signature to site availability, it was a little under 90 minutes. It was one of the fastest that I've ever seen."

Security measures and constant updates to both reliability and compliance are key security objectives the company strives for as it engages with potential and existing customers.

"In today's society, you hear about breaches left and right," said Andersen. "Six Flags takes security to the highest degree and we take very seriously the implications of data security."

Given the sheer volume of credit cards it processes every year, Six Flags goes above and beyond in protecting customer data.

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"When you come to the park and you scan your thumbprint and you are filling out forms to register your season pass, we are building a profile," said Andersen. "We're not able to reconstruct your thumbprint. We don't keep those records, but we do need to be able to identify you so we can help prevent fraud. While we collect your address, and obviously your credit card, we put our own safety standards and mandates behind that—making sure that data is encrypted above and beyond what the federal measures for it require."

The Six Flags team looks at required security infrastructure and compliance requirements, and then it takes those measures further. It's also something that Andersen said gives the team peace of mind.

"While we might not have to abide by PCI rules because we're not technically taking the credit card in that infrastructure, we make a point to follow the same rules and guidelines as a PCI infrastructure and place those rules on that Rackspace environment. We are trying to basically make sure that no matter how mundane that information is that we're capturing, it's encrypted and we're securing that data as best as possible."

READY FOR TOMORROW

Andersen cites the responsiveness of Rackspace as a major factor in helping him and his team meet challenges and be better equipped for growth.

“There are many small moments that affirm that I am working with a good partner and not just a vendor,” he said. “That’s really what separates Rackspace. I have never seen a company that is so able to address a problem consistently, calmly—and when Rackspace comes back with a solution, it’s thoughtful and it’s the right solution.

After working with Rackspace for a number of years, Andersen states that he feels great about the relationship. “Having an account lead and a technical lead that help us understand problems and give us the right solution that they can quickly deploy and also support and manage is tremendous.”

“It’s nice to know that I can say, ‘I have a problem that needs to be solved with an enormous amount of data storage in a very short time,’ and Rackspace will come back to me with a solution that makes economical sense and then also is able to scale and get set up fast.”

Andersen sees Rackspace as an indispensable service partner. “Solutions that our Rackspace team brings ... often help us in ways that we never would have come up with on our own. This is the value of our relationship and what helps separate Rackspace from the pack. It makes Rackspace our true partner.”

ABOUT RACKSPACE

Rackspace (NYSE: RAX), **the #1 managed cloud company**, helps businesses tap the power of cloud computing without the challenge and expense of managing complex IT infrastructure and application platforms on their own. Rackspace engineers deliver specialized expertise on top of leading technologies developed by OpenStack®, Microsoft®, VMware® and others, through a results-obsessed service known as **Fanatical Support®**.

Learn more at www.rackspace.com or call us at **1-800-961-2888**.

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