



## Revolutionizing a collectibles industry online, International Military Antiques strengthens links to history

**Fueled by Rackspace, IMA navigates surging growth, and bridges five centuries of world history in the process**

Founded in 1981, International Military Antiques (IMA) is the world's leading retailer of pre-1945 military collectibles and antiques.

Based in Gillette, New Jersey, this one-of-a-kind organization offers a direct link to the past. The sheer size and variety of IMA's inventory sets it apart. The company possesses thousands of military antique items, including extremely rare original pieces spanning 500 years of world history. In addition to serving collectors and re-enactors, IMA has supplied some of the world's prominent museums, including the National World War II Museum and West Point Museum.

Serving customers from all over the world, the company also supplies period-accurate military pieces for many Hollywood productions, including the feature film *Saving Private Ryan*, and the HBO television series *Band of Brothers*. More recently,

The National Geographic Channel created a television series about the company, entitled "Family Guns" — a reference to IMA founder Christian Cranmer, who was joined by his son Alex to help run the company in 2004.

"At first it was just a mail order company, and in 2004 I joined and brought us online," Alex Cranmer, Vice President of International Military Antiques. "Almost

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**"I would recommend  
Rackspace to anyone running  
an ecommerce website  
anywhere in the world."**

**Alex Cranmer**  
Vice President, International  
Military Antiques

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### AT-A-GLANCE

#### CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

World's largest retailer of vintage military antiques and collectibles.

#### CHALLENGES:

Capitalize on the interest generated and maximize inventory visibility

#### RACKSPACE® SOLUTION:

Rackspace Managed Cloud

#### BUSINESS OUTCOME:

Responsiveness and scale that enables the company to deliver consistent, fast performance and support.

overnight our revenue doubled and today we are a thousand percent bigger than we were a decade ago."

### OPTIMIZING FOR GROWTH

Despite that it carries an inventory with a staggering date range, from 1580 through about 1945, the company employs a small staff of 12. With the recent success and higher profile, IMA has felt significant growing pains.

"What used to be a busy day for us was fulfilling 20 orders, and today we fulfill 150," said Cranmer. "I have zero technical staff, and 99 percent of our sales are through online sales marketplaces."

IMA launched its first ecommerce site in 2004, an open source solution on a virtual private server. With less than 2,000 visitors per month, the company didn't need many resources back then.

"Rackspace allows me to focus on my business, do what I'm good at, and they worry about scaling for our traffic, for our sales, for all our needs."

**Alex Cranmer**

Vice President, International Military Antiques

When sales doubled within two months of the launch of the website, the swift growth created infrastructure problems. "Systems here just were not designed to accommodate the orders," said Cranmer. "Then we got to holiday that year, it was so bad that we had to hire staff to write the orders out. There had to be a better way."

By February of 2005, Cranmer had the entire company in the cloud. Still there were growing pains. "We didn't have servers, and we were going to use the website to process orders," he said. "The business and the fact that we were so successful in ecommerce came from the need to do it, because my dad was selling by mail order. When was the last time you got a catalog, and decided to call and place the order for mail order? That business model, it's got to be dead, and if it's not dead, it's close. So we bridged the gap, and I'm happy I helped him in this business, and now it's given me a whole career I never expected to have, and it's fun."

## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF RACKSPACE CAPABILITIES

As IMA grew, the company scaled to accommodate more and more visitors. Cranmer moved to Rackspace and Magento in 2010.

"We wanted a more responsive website, adding mobile — which also requires more power to run fast, and to render properly on all devices," he said. "The great thing about ecommerce is if you've made good decisions around who your partners are, things won't go wrong, and if they do, they'll be fixed quickly."

In 2012, IMA needed to prepare for an anticipated surge in traffic coinciding with the premiere episode of "Family Guns" on National Geographic Channel. The series generated a 300% visitor increase as well as a 50% uptick in sales.

"When we had our reality television show, the very first night I had my laptop in my hand and my TV controller in the other, and as the show came on, and the website URL came up, I went right to the website and said, 'Is it freezing?' And it didn't."

IMA was able to field that traffic seamlessly on Magento with two servers, and one database. "We did something different with MySQL and with caching, and the combination of the big servers and the software solution allowed us to have 18,000 concurrent users at one time on Magento with basically two servers. It worked."

## A STRONG FUTURE IN PRESERVING THE PAST

Today IMA is uniquely positioned. Essentially, it is among the world's leading purveyors of history. "We travel all over the world to find these items, and they're not making any more of it. We have 60,000 square feet of warehouse space that's absolutely full."

The company site is averaging about 150,000 unique visitors a month, and at the holidays we peak around 300,000 with 20,000 users a day.

IMA is appreciative of its ability to serve a highly specialized clientele with a sophisticated ecommerce website, built on Magento Enterprise with Rackspace Managed Cloud.

"Our website is our baby. If we were to lose it even for 24 hours, it would hurt. We're selling old stuff, but I want to sell it in the newest way. I want to sell old stuff in a cutting edge technology, and if we didn't have the speed behind it, we would lose sales. Because we don't necessarily have direct competitors, but when you think about what somebody wants to spend their money on, that's their hobby, there's cars, there's art. There's a lot of other things out there that I'm competing with. So if I can give them a first class ecommerce experience, my chances of getting a sale greatly improve, and Rackspace allows me to do that."

The man who helped build IMA for the next generation is also a self-described ecommerce geek. "I like looking at numbers that revolve around selling things online, because data doesn't lie," said Cranmer. "We know so many things about our shoppers. We know what they do on our website. We know what sells, what doesn't, and the challenge is to find out why."

Cranmer's take on **Fanatical Support**® is one of a kind as well. "There's this thing at Rackspace called Fanatical Support which makes me laugh, because you think about guys running around the office, throwing things, and shouting," he said. But it's actually true. I can't remember the time I've submitted a ticket for whatever reason, and it hasn't been answered in minutes. Usually it's, "We need more information." Then I have to look it up or supply it. I think that's really what separates Rackspace from any other hosting provider we've ever worked with. It is Fanatical Support."

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**FANATICAL SUPPORT.**

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