

SHOE CARNIVAL®

Strong Partnership, State-of-the-Art Infrastructure Drive Shoe Carnival's Ecommerce Growth

Already differentiating store experience, Shoe Carnival relies on Rackspace to deliver a stand-apart customer experience.

A chain of more than 400 footwear stores located in 33 states, Shoe Carnival is a leading retailer of name brand and private label footwear. Founded in 1978, the company is headquartered in Evansville, Indiana.

The Shoe Carnival concept is relatively unique, with each retail location creating a high-energy atmosphere — producing in-store surprises with features such as a “spinning wheel of savings,” and a store team member on a microphone who interacts with shoppers.

“We have a high level of customer service within the stores,” said Kent Zimmerman, Shoe Carnival VP of Ecommerce. “All of our inventory is exposed. To entertain our customers, we create a fun place with music and excitement.”

Since its inception, Shoe Carnival has always placed a high emphasis on technology. The

company's Oracle Commerce stack is hosted at Rackspace. Shoe Carnival has a large number of servers that support its website, as well as components related to the Oracle Commerce engine.

“We've always had the ability to look at new technology, embrace it and then maximize the use of it,” said Terry Clemmons, Senior VP and CIO for Shoe Carnival. With customers in both the brick and mortar stores as well

“After working with other providers in the space, I've never seen anyone approach issues with the same enthusiasm Rackspace does.”

Kent Zimmerman
VP of eCommerce, Shoe Carnival

AT-A-GLANCE

CUSTOMER'S BUSINESS:

Retail and ecommerce sales of popular shoe brands.

CHALLENGES:

Extend the Shoe Carnival experience to customers online — update technology and expand brand into the Northeast.

RACKSPACE® SOLUTION:

Rackspace Managed Cloud, Cloud Databases, Critical Application Services

BUSINESS OUTCOME:

Greater infrastructure and scale, ensuring that customers are getting the best experience possible.

as online, Shoe Carnival has adapted well to retail trends and technologies.

ZEROING IN ON TECHNOLOGY

The company came to Rackspace after a brief search. Rackspace was a best fit because of its Oracle Commerce expertise, its infrastructure capabilities, and the ability to support fast growth.

“Until recently, Shoe Carnival had been a point of information site, and we had never had an online channel,” said Zimmerman. “We wanted to align ourselves with partners who are best in class for what they do, and we felt the right fit was the Rackspace approach.”

Shoe Carnival is also leveraging Rackspace database expertise. “We're also using the critical application services, which is unique to what we needed to accomplish,” said Zimmerman. “In looking at other hosting

“Rackspace has helped us understand what changes need to be made, and we have a direct relationship. I can definitely call them up, and they take action.”

Terry Clemmons

Senior VP and CIO, Shoe Carnival

options out there, not everyone had that ability to bring those critical application services to help us to grow.”

Low cost was not as important a factor as specialized expertise. While Oracle Commerce’s expertise helps the customer leverage best practices, Zimmerman sees Rackspace as being just as capable in steering his staff in the right direction architecture and infrastructure:

“From an infrastructure support standpoint and a response standpoint, whenever issues arise, we know we have Rackspace people responding who know the stack, know the application, and know how to respond.”

Clemmons added that despite the fact that Shoe Carnival has a challenging and unique architecture, the Rackspace team “has gone over and above” to understand its quirks.

“Sometimes things will happen, but the way the Rackspace people have reacted, and the approach that they’ve taken to owning issues that arise until they’re resolved, have really to me been above and beyond,” he said.

Shoe Carnival is going through a period of high growth now, both in retail and online. The company newly offers shipping of orders directly from stores. With more stores opening, and a national advertising campaign breaking, management wanted to ensure that the online experience for the customer matched the “upgrade” happening company-wide.

“Those who know us primarily as a traditional retail brand are now discovering us online, and it’s driving greater traffic to our site,” said Zimmerman. “Visitors to Shoe Carnival.com see an assortment that represents millions of units across hundreds of stores, and it creates a higher level of satisfaction for the customer to know, if we don’t have their size, we’ll find their item in a location, and direct-ship it.”

FUELING THE FUTURE VIA FANATICAL SUPPORT

Shoe Carnival cited the collaborative relationship and Rackspace Fanatical Support as major reasons why the two companies are working so well together.

“To me, Rackspace Fanatical Support means a dedication to owning a problem and owning a situation and seeing it through and not letting up until the problem is solved or maybe thinking outside of the box to try to figure out how the problem is solved,” said Zimmerman.

As the company moves forward, the goal is to improve the online experience, to that of not just another shoe store online.

“We are extending that ‘surprise and delight’ concept online, by giving the customer little flash sales that maybe they didn’t expect, and we’ll be doing some more of that as we get closer to holidays,” said Zimmerman. “We will be looking to recreate the spinning wheel online, and do the things that set us apart from most of the other online shoe retailers.”

ALL BACKED BY
FANATICAL SUPPORT.

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