



SUNPOWER®

Sunpower Keeps its Edge in the Solar Industry by Gravitating to the Cloud Leveraging its partnership on the Rackspace Managed Cloud to stay at the forefront of a rapidly changing solar industry.

SunPower is a leading solar technology and energy service provider that produces the most efficient solar cells and panels on the market today. The company was founded in 1985 by Dr. Richard Swanson, an electrical engineering professor at Stanford who was among the first to explore solar technology. Over several decades, what began as a manufacturing company has evolved into a vertically integrated company that produces, delivers, installs, and monitors commercial and residential systems for clients around the globe.

As an energy service provider, SunPower gives customers the tools they need to produce their own solar power, store it with batteries, and monitor their energy usage and storage. Through their smart systems of Internet-connected devices and machines, SunPower captures massive amounts of data—over 50 million data events each day from the 800 commercial and power plants and 30,000 residential systems

they are currently monitoring. SunPower uses the data to understand and leverage patterns of consumption and usage and to empower customers by giving them access to individual data.

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Rich Robinson,
VP Business Technology & CIO, SunPower

AT-A-GLANCE

CUSTOMER’S BUSINESS:

SunPower is a leading solar technology and energy service provider that produces the most efficient solar cells and panels on the market today.

CHALLENGES:

With the current and predicted growth in solar energy consumption, advances in Big Data analytics, and advances in their own smart systems and data-capturing potential, SunPower sees its future in the cloud.

RACKSPACE® SOLUTION:

Rackspace Managed Cloud, OpenStack®, 24x7x365 Managed Support

BUSINESS OUTCOME:

SunPower now has a hosted environment that models their previous architecture but will let them transition to the cloud at a gradual pace that makes sense for their business.

Although solar currently comprises just 1% of the total energy stack, researchers estimate it will reach 40% over the next century, and the pace of growth has already begun to accelerate. As the solar industry begins to gain traction and as technological disruptions open up new possibilities for vastly improving the way solar energy is produced and consumed, SunPower is looking ahead and preparing for major changes to ensure they stay at the forefront of their field. For now, that means making a transition to the cloud and setting up an infrastructure that will let them scale quickly as they enter new markets and business continues to grow along with the rise in solar.

PARTNERING WITH RACKSPACE FOR A FUTURE IN THE CLOUD

In the face of industry-wide changes and massive predicted increases in data, it wasn’t hard for SunPower to determine its future was in the cloud. Once they had come to this

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realization, however, they were faced with the challenge of making the transition. As a company with a large legacy footprint, they knew that they were facing a real challenge and began looking for a hosting provider that could offer support and cost-effective solutions.

Rich Robinson, SunPower’s CIO and VP of Business Technology says Rackspace offered them the solutions and value they needed, but it was also important to them to find a partner they felt could match them in speed and flexibility, given how rapidly their industry is changing. “Our goal is to be number one to react,” Robinson explains. “We’re aggressive, and having a partner that’s flexible and can move as fast as we can and deliver is very important. We look for partners who can react as quickly as we do.”

Robinson credits the Rackspace specialists with a successful initial migration and says the support they’ve provided throughout has been invaluable. “From my past experience with teams transitioning to the cloud, I can tell you that the transition is not trivial,” Robinson says. “One of the great advantages that partnering with Rackspace allows is a gradual transition. We’re able to migrate legacy applications to a hosted environment very much like the ones that we would have ourselves and then over time we can move those into the OpenStack cloud, rather than doing a wholesale forklift redo of our applications. That gives us time to truly do it right and focus on the other things that are very important as well.”

MANAGED CLOUD AND DEVOPS EXPERTISE

SunPower relies on the Rackspace Managed Cloud, which Robinson says allows them to stay focused on their core business —

developing new products and services for their customers — and aligns well with their goals as a company. “In a world of constrained resources where you need to focus, we want to focus on the customer and on building the specific SunPower offering. We want to partner and to let someone else staff those really important skills needed to take care of infrastructure. We have a great small team here, but our goal isn’t to grow that team to scale. We want to leverage partners to scale.”

Robinson says he especially appreciates being able to outsource DevOps planning to the Rackspace experts. “DevOps is an area where it’s hard to find people that have the skills,” said Robinson. “To build a team of highly trained specialists, capable of bringing those four or five ‘nines’ of reliability and quality and service...that’s a special team you have to put together. So it’s great to partner with Rackspace, who can bring that to the table and allow us to focus on developing our very specific SunPower applications and services. It’s a fantastic offering.”

For other companies making similar transitions, given the degree of support and expertise that comes free with their hosting services, Robinson says he wouldn’t hesitate to recommend Rackspace. “When you’re dealing with Rackspace and you’re leveraging them for infrastructure, you get more than that. Rackspace stands behind that infrastructure to include migration, usage, planning for future architecture...and it’s all just part of the package. I think for any company with a significant legacy footprint, if you believe that you need to be in the cloud, you need to think about a provider that can be there with you through the transition,” he adds. “Rackspace is a great partner to look at.”

ALL BACKED BY
FANATICAL SUPPORT.

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