

White Paper October 2012

By Jose Santos, Director of Alliance and Partner Programs

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Climax Media

Migrating to Enterprise-Grade Web Hosting
to Deliver Client Performance and Uptime

Overview

Climax Media
www.climaxmedia.com



Industry	Full-service web design and development agency
Locations	Toronto, Canada
Employees	Approximately 40
Customers	Over 300
Problem	Poor site performance and delayed support response from previous hosting provider impacted agency's and its customers' sites
Solution	Dedicated hosting with PEER 1 Hosting
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved page load times by over 18%• Experienced more than 7% increase in site visit duration• Decreased bounce rate from traffic driven by Google AdWords by more than 13.5%• Saw more than 17.5% increase in click-through rate on landing pages• Saw nearly 21% of site visitors filling out quote request form• Increased conversion rates on quote page by nearly 8.5%• Reduced time spent on system maintenance• Eliminated customer complaints about sluggish performance

“From its secure, enterprise-grade infrastructure and server management tools that allow us to be more hands on, to its 41,000 square foot datacenter in downtown Toronto and impressive track record with countless clients, PEER 1 Hosting gives us the peace of mind we need.

– **Elijah Vieau, Internet Marketing Manager, Climax Media**



What Was at Stake

When you're a full-service web agency, your reputation is on the line with every customer website project. And these days, companies expect their sites to be up and running at high speed and without fail. Those were the expectations that Climax Media needed to satisfy for its growing customer base. So when its hosting company could no longer ensure infrastructure performance and stopped responding quickly to service requests, Climax Media turned to PEER 1 Hosting. "PEER 1 Hosting enabled us to deliver the enterprise-class support and infrastructure we needed to take our business to the next level," says Matt Van Vuuren, CTO of Climax Media.

The Need for High Performance Hosting

For 12 years, Climax Media has specialized in web development and design, serving over 300 clients, including Fortune 500 companies across Canada. Priding itself on being a full-service web agency, the firm doesn't outsource any major service offerings, other than web hosting services. Its team of rapidly growing talent can address everything from mobile and web design, application development, and custom content management systems to digital marketing and social media strategies. While it serves companies around the world, Climax Media is known as the one-stop shop in Toronto, Canada, its home base.

According to Elijah Vieau, Internet Marketing Manager for Climax Media, the company is very performance-based in its approach to client projects. "Performance is at the foundation of everything we do. When we build a site, we're just as focused on helping our client improve the performance of its online presence and business as we are on developing an aesthetically pleasing site." This dedication is what enables Climax Media to develop long-standing relationships with satisfied clients.

It starts with building a solid web foundation from the get-go, and advising clients over the years as to how they can reuse and expand their sites. In fact, Climax Media offers to re-theme or relaunch its clients' sites every few years so they can keep pace with the latest trends. "By taking this iterative approach, we make it possible for our clients to avoid changing their entire web framework every few years," says Van Vuuren.

In the company's early days, site performance wasn't much of an issue. After all, site visitor expectations were not that high. However, today's visitors expect sites to load in mere seconds. Moreover, the search engines penalize sites that don't load quickly. As a firm helping clients deliver memorable web experiences and improve their search engine results, Climax Media is just as concerned about performance as usability and the end-user experience.

Outgrowing Its Hosting Provider

Rightfully so, the firm's clients see Climax Media as a turnkey solution. Even though the agency is not directly responsible for site hosting, any site issues reflect poorly on Climax Media.

When it first began working with its previous hosting provider in 2007, Climax Media had no complaints. However, as the hosting provider took on more clients, site performance issues began to plague Climax Media. In attempts to keep up with the strain of serving more clients, the provider kept updating its network. But the addition of so many hops and switches led to performance delays. It didn't help that the provider's datacenter was geographically distant from the majority of Climax Media's clients.

"We monitor site performance and could see the steady decline. Plus, our customers were starting to complain. While the gripes were often fairly minor, we always strive to deliver top-notch service and anything less than that is unacceptable," explains Van Vuuren.

To make matters worse, the hosting provider's support process began to deteriorate. As a result, Climax Media often found itself waiting for hours to speak with someone about resolving site performance issues. "When your client's site goes down, you can't wait 24 hours for a resolution – their business is on the line. It's especially problematic when you're managing sites for 40-50 companies at once, many of whom draw tens or hundreds of thousands of unique visitors per month," says Vieau.

Moreover, the firm's own site was suffering. Climax Media was seeing people fall out of its funnel at the very beginning. They would arrive on a landing page on the Climax Media site after clicking on a Google ad, and as many as 70% were then dropping off. "We rely on our site to generate leads and business and can lose thousands of dollars when site performance is sluggish," continues Vieau. Climax Media and its clients were seeing lower results for SEO, PPC, and shopping cart completions.

Going With a Proven Partner

Realizing that its hosting vendor was no longer up to par, Climax Media began assessing its options. "We do all we can to optimize coding and the user experience, but that's only part of the equation. We also needed to optimize the infrastructure supporting our site and our clients' sites," explains Van Vuuren.

Climax Media looked at Rackspace and a couple of smaller hosting providers. However, some of the providers had experienced network problems that left its clients' sites offline for a few hours. Climax Media was also not overly impressed with their levels of support or richness of the back-end control interfaces offered.

One of Climax Media's sister companies had co-located with PEER 1 Hosting for years. So it was natural for the firm to consider PEER 1 Hosting. That said, Climax Media conducted an analysis to make sure its needs would be fully met. The

assessment involved Van Vuuren, Vieau, the firm's Director of Technology Strategy, a senior developer, and the Managing Director. "As web hosting is one of our more established offerings, we had to make sure every angle was covered before making a decision," explains Vieau.

In addition to its reputation, PEER 1 Hosting stood out for its geo-location, network stability, back-end control interface, and expertise. "The PEER 1 Hosting account center provides us with lots of control managing edits and redirects. Moreover, with much of our client base in the Toronto area, we appreciated that PEER 1 Hosting has a datacenter here," explains Van Vuuren.

According to Vieau, PEER 1 Hosting's support team is extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Just as importantly, Vieau continues, its people are passionate. "PEER 1 Hosting is just as passionate about what it does for clients as we are about what we do for ours. We felt a real chemistry with them."

Within a week of moving its site over to PEER 1 Hosting, Climax Media was convinced it had made the right decision. "It was night and day in terms of speed and load times. The performance was so impressive that it was a no brainer to go with PEER 1 Hosting," recalls Van Vuuren. Without hesitation, Climax Media moved its own site's server to PEER 1 Hosting and experienced a smooth migration.

"PEER 1 Hosting is the definition of what we expect from web hosting: blistering speed, minimal loading time, and unparalleled client support from people who understand and care," says Vieau.

Reaping the Benefits of Fast Site Performance

Since the move to PEER 1 Hosting, Climax Media's own site page load times have improved by over 18%. It has also seen its search engine rankings consistently improve. Whereas it previously ranked on the first page of Google for 15-20 keywords, it now ranks for 30-40. "Some of our main keywords were stagnant despite our SEO efforts. When we moved to PEER 1 Hosting, some of those keywords leapt 5, 10, and 15 spots up within a month or two. We're certain that the decrease in page load times has contributed to this improvement because site speed is one of Google's criteria for ranking," explains Vieau.

The performance improvements have directly impacted Climax Media's lead generation efforts. The firm has seen a more than 7% increase in visit duration and more than 13.5% decrease in bounce rate from traffic driven by Google AdWords. At the same time, it's seeing a more than 17.5% increase in the click-through rate on its landing pages. Nearly 21% of site visitors end up filling out the quote request form, and Climax Media has seen a nearly 8.5% increase in conversion rates on its quote page.

"We saw a dramatic change in our business within months of being with PEER 1 Hosting – we're generating more revenues and growing rapidly. Having good solid hosting is the backbone because it's the first interaction people have with us," explains Vieau.

On rare occasions when Climax Media needs to contact PEER 1 Hosting's support, it gets a fast response. Moreover, it spends significantly less time on system maintenance, which frees up the agency's developers and IT staff to work on revenue-generating customer projects.

The Benefits of Migrating Clients' Servers

To date, nearly every Climax Media client has opted to move to PEER 1 Hosting. "Our clients can choose where they host their sites and the majority see the benefit of migrating when we show them the performance improvements – and associated business benefits – they can expect. It's a pretty easy sell," explains Vieau.

As an example, two of Climax Media's clients have seen the impact of moving to PEER 1 Hosting. One, in the media industry, has seen a 14% increase in pages per visit, a nearly 55% increase in average visit duration, and a more than 33% increase in average time on page – all within three months. Another company, providing consumer services, has seen a nearly 54% increase in unique visitors, close to a 33% increase in referral traffic from Google, and just over 16% improvement in average site visit duration – again, within three months of being on the new platform.

Climax Media's long-term strategy is to provide hosting for all its major, local clients from one convenient location – the PEER 1 Hosting datacenter in Toronto. That will make it more efficient for the firm to perform upgrades, migrations, and any other tasks for its clients. And Climax Media appreciates the versatility it gets by hosting with PEER 1 Hosting. "We pride ourselves on serving companies like Honda, Brookfield, and Acura, along with smaller, homegrown businesses. With PEER 1 Hosting, we can adeptly serve our small clients while getting the mass scalability we need for our larger clients – all on a single platform and in a single environment," concludes Vieau.