

Dogster Membership Grows with ServerBeach Private Net Service

Case Study

Dogster.com

Industry

Social Networks, Pets

Profile

Since launching in 2004, Dogster.com (and its sister service Catster.com) has become the fastest growing pet destination on the Internet. The company is staffed by 17 employees (and five office dogs) who are self-described “dog freaks and computer geeks.” Noticing the lack of a truly interactive social media site focused on dogs and cats, they built one themselves. Their fluffy love is backed with serious technology and years of coding experience.

However, Dogster.com is more than just another niche social media site – it is a community of passionate pet lovers. With more than 800,000 members uploading massive amounts of content on a daily basis, network reliability is crucial to keep this community happy.

“Our users love that their friends are here all day long, every day,” said Dogster Founder and Owner Ted Rheingold. “The sites being up are critical. We’ve created a really safe, vibrant community. Part of the expectation from our users is that this community is there all the time.”

Challenge

Dogster began in 2004 like many Internet startups, with a creative idea and a small following. Initially, Rheingold’s site drew 100,000 unique visitors per month. However, what started off small quickly became viral. Four years after launch, unique visits to the site have increased ten-fold, to more than 1,000,000 visitors each month. With all that interest also came drastically increased data loads. Currently, Dogster hosts more than three million uploaded user photos.

As Dogster grew at a rapid rate it faced IT infrastructure challenges, such as having the ability to scale Web site traffic and maintain speed for server-to-server communication. A solid network backbone and reliable support system were a must for this burgeoning community. The ability of a hosting provider to provide this was crucial to Dogster’s overall business growth.

“From the very beginning, it was important for us to have a sustainable business. Dogster grew server-by-server, and ServerBeach, PEER 1’s Dedicated Hosting division, helped Dogster grow this way with affordable prices. It really made a difference for us not to have to invest in hardware that we didn’t need at the time,” Rheingold said.

Additionally, speed was, and continues to be, a priority. “We get a lot of information out there, and a lot of search engines link to Dogster,” said Rheingold. “One month alone, we had 600,000 visits from search engines. The site has to be there, fast and available, or our community cannot continue to grow.”

Solution

Dogster was introduced to ServerBeach and bought its first server in 2004. At that time, ServerBeach was a cost effective solution for a startup company like Dogster. Through the years with ServerBeach, as the Dogster memberships grew, their server needs grew, as well. Starting off their dedicated hosting solution with a single server, Dogster now relies on 35 servers to keep their network up and running.

ServerBeach was able to scale with Dogster’s quick growth and offer the expertise and right solutions to fully support the company’s system to increase speed for server-to-server communication, Dogster also needed to implement internal communication between their servers without having to go over the public Internet. ServerBeach realized this importance and migrated its server infrastructure into a private net configuration at the ServerBeach San Antonio data center. The private net not only allowed Dogster to transfer their data quickly and safely, but they were able to add servers to their configuration seamlessly

In addition, to ensure that Dogster users could access their community whenever they demand, Rheingold required a hosting facility with redundant power supply, so that local power issues do not impact his online global community. ServerBeach is not reliant upon the local power grid to guarantee maximum uptime. Its on-site, auto-switched power generators and centralized UPS systems provide power conditioning and ensure uninterrupted data center operation. Additionally, every major component of the emergency power system is regularly serviced and tested to ensure that it continues to function in the event of any issue or emergency.

Benefits

Fast Connections

Partnering with ServerBeach offers Dogster lightning-fast 100MB connections to the public Internet and Gigabit connections on private net. These port options helped Dogster scale Web site traffic. In the beginning, Dogster's configuration only needed to handle bursts of traffic. However, as this traffic continuously increased, Dogster was able to setup additional servers seamlessly without latency or downtime to their main site. To give customers such as Dogster peace of mind and eliminate worrying about such fluctuations, ServerBeach also offers an unlimited bandwidth option on both the 10Mbps and 100Mbps ports.

Customizable Solution and Pricing

Scale and affordability – those are the two attributes that initially drew Dogster to ServerBeach. Like many Internet startups, Dogster began with a server and a dream. But as that dream grew, so too did their need for more server space: What started off as a single-server hosting solution has grown into a sophisticated farm utilizing 35 servers. By utilizing PEER 1's fully redundant network infrastructure that runs through 15 state-of-the-art data centers and 21 points-of-presence (PoPs) across North America, ServerBeach ensures a company's data center solution grows in respect to its overall operations.

Solid Support

In the event of a technical issue, ServerBeach's dedicated Account Manager gives Dogster a support option that is available at any time, 24/7. Though it is not often Dogster has to contact ServerBeach, when they do, ServerBeach is always available for them.

"Tickets are treated with a serious concern, just as we'd treat tickets within our own company," Rheingold said. "There are never any surprises."