

One to Grow On

Using FusionStorm's managed services allows OpsTechnology to focus on business development.

The more a company grows, the more IT resources it requires. So how do you continue to grow the business while still keeping IT costs and complexity under control?

That was the dilemma recently faced by OpsTechnology, a San Francisco-based company that develops Web-based software tools designed to help real estate operating companies better manage their procurement and spending. Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer Sukhi Singh said the company took a hard look at its expanding technology infrastructure after experiencing "massive growth" in the past year.

"We started out by doing everything, but we have reached the point where we need to focus on our growing number of customers rather than on making sure the system is up and running," he said. "Being an expert in everything, including infrastructure and software development, is very difficult. We'd need to have a Veritas expert, a Sun expert, an Oracle expert, a SQL expert and an IBM expert on staff, but that's just impossible for us. We're a small company.

"We understand what we're good at and what we need help with. With the growth we're experiencing, plus the increasing demands of government regulations, IT auditing and security requirements, we saw quickly that we were going to have to staff up in a way that we weren't interested in pursuing."

Above and Beyond

Rather than throwing more money and personnel at infrastructure issues, OpsTechnology decided to seek a technology partner who could offer specific expertise in the management, monitoring and maintenance of network devices, servers, system software, databases, storage systems and applications. FusionStorm offered all that — and more.

"When we began discussions with managed service providers, FusionStorm went above and

beyond what we were seeing in the marketplace," said Singh. "We wanted someone who was going to jump all over this thing and make it a priority, and we really got that from FusionStorm. Nobody else made the effort to understand our business to the extent that they did."

FusionStorm spent approximately 720 man hours just identifying OpsTechnology's needs and the correct deliverables ahead of the actual engagement, according to Steve Stavropoulos, senior sales engineer for FusionStorm Managed Services. Anjou Vandever, senior account executive, and Steve Soper, director of Oracle professional services, were key members of the FusionStorm team. As part of that up-front effort, FusionStorm was able to identify some disk arrays and other hardware that needed to be replaced in order to stabilize the network.

"We really wanted to understand what OpsTechnology's business was all about, what the end product looks like to their customers and what they're guaranteeing to their end-customer," said Stavropoulos. "By laying the groundwork up front, we were able to provide a solution that satisfies not only what OpsTechnology needs as an organization, but what OpsTechnology's customers need at the final delivery point."

Focus on the Core

OpsTechnology's software products leverage the Web to connect publicly traded real estate investment trusts (REITs) and other commercial, residential, retail and office property management firms with providers of key goods and services. The software enables OpsTechnology's clients to establish private trading networks with appliance, flooring and maintenance supply vendors, as well as carpet cleaning, plumbing and landscaping companies. The system stores all of the ordering, approval, invoicing and payment data in a central data warehouse.

With OpsTechnology's software, clients are



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able to track and manage their purchasing patterns in real time. The system also automatically enters general ledger codes onto invoices, maintains property-level expense information from multiple vendors, integrates with a budget module and matches invoices to purchase orders.

“Our core business is application development and service to the end-user,” said Singh. “It is all built upon an infrastructure that we put in place, but that’s a part of the business we don’t have expertise in. FusionStorm has the expertise. They have their database team, their IT team, their Microsoft team, their security team, and more. There is a lot of bench strength and expertise within that company that I just didn’t have access to.”

Opportunity NOCs

Few small to midsize organizations have the tools or talent to proactively monitor the health of their networks. IT staff must react to network faults and performance degradations, poring over event logs to try to find issues and resolve them. Trouble is, networks are increasingly complex, and isolated events don’t always point to the root cause of network problems. Network managers often find themselves solving the same problems over and over — problems that become more serious as the number of users and importance of network availability increase.

While keeping tabs on all the factors that impact network performance would normally require a significant investment in network management and monitoring tools, FusionStorm achieves economies of scale by spreading the cost of its state-of-the-art network operations center (NOC) across numerous customers. Each customer can utilize the NOC resources at a very small fraction of the cost of deploying them in-house.

Through its NOC, FusionStorm hosts OpsTechnology’s primary production site, which consists of a number of a Web servers, application servers, middle-tier application servers and back-end databases, including Oracle and SQL. FusionStorm also provides full data backups, 24x7 network monitoring, security and assessments.

“In addition, the network is fully fault tolerant and redundant, which allows them the flexibility of making sure there is a very tight service level agreement around it,” said Stavropoulos. “We provide them an SLA of around 99.99 percent availability and uptime, which is something that’s very difficult to achieve if the network is hosted internally.”

Many Benefits

FusionStorm has been managing OpsTechnology’s infrastructure since September 2005. While Singh doesn’t yet have enough data to quantify his company’s hard-dollar savings with managed services, he says many other benefits are easy to identify.

“There are definitely some dollar savings from a labor perspective, and from a budgeting and recurring cash flow perspective it’s nice to have a predictable cost for these expenses,” Singh said. “But while cost is a driver, it is not the sole driver.

“There is great comfort in knowing that if something goes wrong, there are experts there within minutes to fix it before I even find out about it. You can’t put a price on that.”

As OpsTechnology continues to grow, FusionStorm’s Managed Services will grow right along with it, allowing the company to meet its business requirements without any significant ramp-up time. This ensures that OpsTechnology will continue to experience reduced operational costs, improved network efficiency and peace of mind.

“In the short term, FusionStorm gives us comfort and credibility and a great solution out the door,” said Singh. “In the long term, they help us maintain efficiency and quality of service to our customers, which is the primary goal.

“We consider the folks at FusionStorm to be an extension of our team. They are incredibly talented at what they do and give us a degree of expertise that I could never have had on my payroll. As we continue to grow, FusionStorm is our partner and we’ll count on them to help us make key decisions in lockstep.”