

MALIBU BOATS

After seeing incredible performance with Rackspace Disaster Recovery Services, Malibu Boats accelerated plans to migrate their core infrastructure to AWS, including their critical manufacturing systems and supporting for complex online customization process.

BUSINESS

World's largest manufacturer of wake, ski and surf boats, with facilities in California, Tennessee and Australia.

CHALLENGES

Securing fast recovery times for manufacturing facilities and improving online customer experience via enhanced customization functionality.

SOLUTIONS

Public Cloud, Disaster Recovery, Professional Services

PRODUCTS

Fanatical Support® for AWS

OUTCOME

Malibu Boats experienced a smooth, efficient migration to the AWS cloud, optimized AWS performance and faster recoveries. Improved online experiences have led to increased customer engagement.



Ski boats built by ski enthusiasts

Named after the coastal paradise where watersports are a way of life, Malibu Boats was conceived by waterski enthusiasts looking to create a new wave of ski boats. Since its inception in 1982, Malibu Boats has grown into the world's leading towboat maker, responsible for innovations like the Wakeboard Hull and the Surf Gate™, and selling half of all towboats sold in the world.

As Malibu Boats' business increasingly moved online, processes and infrastructure became taxed. So, Malibu Boats set its course down a new path of innovation: improving infrastructure and disaster recovery processes to support an enhanced online experience – including the ability to customize, save configurations and buy boats completely online. The company also explored new ways to manage manufacturing and shipping of their products.

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GREG WARD :: VICE PRESIDENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY
MALIBU BOATS

Planning for worst-case scenarios

The first step in transformation was implementing a reliable, secure disaster recovery solution. Back-end applications are a critical piece of the factory. If the technological systems go down, then the factory shuts down. And every second of an outage costs money and productivity. “Anybody that’s in technology knows that you’re always going to have a hiccup,” said Greg Ward, Vice President of IT at Malibu Boats. “You have to be prepared, and you have to be able to recover quickly and get your systems back up and running.”

CloudEndure was chosen from the Rackspace ecosystem of partners to supplement a new cloud disaster recovery plan. CloudEndure offers an aggressive recovery point objective and time objective with the ability to fail over and fail back. It eliminates cloud lock-in and can support any kind of infrastructure – physical, virtual or cloud-based. From product selection through the proof-of-concept phase, Rackspace worked with Malibu Boats, confirming that the software could be installed on all the appropriate machines and applications without disruption, and demonstrating that their applications could recover into AWS.

Fast recovery, increased performance

Shortly after implementation, Malibu Boats suffered a disruption in a production server, providing an opportunity to test its new disaster-recovery solution. “When Malibu Boats called us and let us know that they needed to recover their server, they spoke with our support team to ensure that all the best practices from a networking point of view were met,” said Gonen Stein, Vice President of Business Development at CloudEndure. “In under 15 minutes, their workloads were all spun up in AWS, and of all their users were happy. They didn’t have to shut down their facility, and when they were ready to go back, they were able to just fail back to Rackspace.”

And when they fail back, they’re able to reverse sync with all of the updated data since the failover. “If we didn’t have the ability to recover as quickly as we did, we’d be dead in the water,” said Ward.

In addition to being happy with the fast recovery, the Malibu Boats team was also pleasantly surprised by the performance of AWS servers. “Once we got back up and running, we quickly noticed that the performance of the server on the AWS environment was at least twice as fast as it was on our current data center environment using the same hardware specifications, the same memory and the same CPU,” said Ward. “We were concerned about the network latency in the cloud versus a direct connection in the data center. When, in fact, it was faster.” Experiencing the speed of AWS was enough to convince Ward and his team to start moving workloads from their data center into the cloud.

Onboarding AWS backed by Fanatical Support

Rackspace taught the Malibu Boats team the ropes of AWS, how to configure their virtual private clouds, security and networking, and helped to accelerate their adoption of the cloud. “Rackspace is more than just a reseller of AWS,” explained Ward. “Rackspace is an architect partner that helps you get in. They’re there with you working through the solution, even working on your behalf with Amazon, to help you come out with the right environment, that you can monitor your costs and with suggestions on how to make that environment cheaper and still meet your production needs.”

For Malibu Boats, Fanatical Support is more than just a slogan – it’s business as usual. “I’ve never called and gotten a ticket system, or a voicemail,” Ward said. “I always get somebody that’s engaged, that knows our environment and that knows how to address our problem without having to kick it up to a second or a third level. You’re dealing with an engineer,” he added.

In addition to having access to experts at their fingertips, Malibu Boats is able to extend its team with hands-on resources to help them reach their cloud ambitions sooner. This allows them to maintain a small, nimble team

focused directly on business problems and working with business groups. According to Ward, “Utilizing Rackspace and their AWS support enables us to move at a faster rate. It was going to take a couple of years to move toward cloud, now we’re able to do it in less than six months.”

With help from their Rackspace team they were able to integrate customization technologies like WebGL and CAD technology. “With all of the product features, design options and complexity in building our boats, we needed some serious resources behind-the-scenes to accommodate thousands of people hitting the site all at the same time – utilizing and experiencing the Malibu Boats web configurator,” Ward said.

He added, “Rackspace was able to help us architect that AWS environment to be scalable, to be able to support all of those needs from the database to the render servers to the web servers themselves, and make all of that work.” The improvements to the Malibu Boats site have once again positioned the company as an innovator. They now have an industry-leading online boat customization engine that that has contributed to an increase in web visitors’ time-on-page rates. “We’re seeing more people engaging in the site’s rich media, which is what we were striving for – to get users to really understand the full Malibu lifestyle and experience,” reported Ward.

Riding the cloud wave into the future

This year, Malibu Boats will manufacture up to 3,500 boats, relying on IT solutions powered on the front end and back end by Rackspace. They’re moving from a data center environment to the cloud, pushing more applications and workloads onto AWS. They’ll continue using Rackspace Disaster Recovery services and CloudEndure as their recovery model. “We’re finally getting to this place where we are able to have more confidence in the network infrastructure, and we have more confidence in the feature sets that are available in the cloud. said Ward. “I don’t think there’s anything you can’t do out there now. We are so confident that it’ll work, that we’re ready to move.”

Ward added, “Rackspace, AWS and CloudEndure was, and is, a core piece of our ability to get to the cloud in a secure and complete way and not just a piecemeal fashion, and not just as a website partner, but a real architect and an extension of our IT department.”

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ABOUT RACKSPACE

Rackspace, the #1 managed cloud company, helps businesses tap the power of cloud computing without the complexity and cost of managing it on their own. Rackspace engineers deliver specialized expertise, easy-to-use tools, and Fanatical Support® for leading technologies developed by AWS, Google, Microsoft, OpenStack, VMware and others. The company serves customers in 150 countries, including more than half of the FORTUNE 100. Rackspace is a leader in the 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Public Cloud Infrastructure Managed Service Providers, Worldwide, and has been honored by Fortune, Forbes and others as one of the best companies to work for.

Learn more at www.rackspace.com or call us at **1-800-961-2888**.

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PUB-CCS-Malibu_Boats-9178

JANUARY 30, 2018

