



backcountry.com

CASE STUDY

BACKCOUNTRY.COM

Backcountry.com is an online retailer that sells high-end outdoor gear for hard-core recreational enthusiasts and athletes. The company is dedicated to being the most successful online retailer of the best-built outdoor and backcountry gear in the world. Born out of the founders' love of skiing and the Internet, Backcountry.com now works with over 385 brands and 100,000 skus. Founded in 1996 with just \$2,000 of the co-founders' own money, Backcountry.com had net sales revenue of \$52 million in FY05. The company has operated out of a 207,000 square foot warehouse in Salt Lake City, Utah since August 2005.

In each year since its establishment, Backcountry.com has sustained almost triple-digit growth. And it continues to flourish. Each month, the site receives an average of 1.1 million visitors looking for gear made by well-known brands such as The North Face, Oakley, Burton, Rossignol, and more. Backcountry.com sells gear for backpacking, camping, skiing, snowboarding, rock climbing, kayaking, adventure travel, trail running, and mountaineering.

CHALLENGE

Backcountry.com has grown rapidly since its first days as an online retailer. With 40,000 visitors to its site each day, Backcountry's greatest challenge is keeping up with the company's constant growth. "We will spend a good deal of money on hardware to keep up with the growth and virtually 12 months later I am back asking for more," said Dave Jenkins, CTO of Backcountry.com. "We are almost always backed-up to maximum capacity."

Additionally, the company needed an e-commerce application platform that could be easily managed on a daily basis by the company's own employees. The company also hoped to provide an opportunity for its employees to be openly innovative with ideas that have potential for implementation and success. "If we had gone with

some sort of proprietary system from a major provider, we would have had to write up specs, hand it to the provider, and then sit on our hands for six months and hope that everything comes back the way we had told them," Jenkins said. Backcountry.com needed the opportunity for independence. In-house innovation. Easy management for its IT environment. And it needed to keep costs in check while implementing a solution that was secure, scalable, flexible, and high-performing.

FAST FACTS

Industry: Consumer, e-commerce

Geography: Park City, Utah

Challenge: To keep up with the rapid yearly growth in a busy e-commerce business and to obtain an application that fosters innovation and easy self-management.

Solution: Red Hat® Enterprise Linux® 3 and 4, Red Hat® Network, Fedora™ Core 5

Hardware: IBM, Dell 2650s, HP

Benefits:

- Flexibility
- Cost savings
- Excellent support
- Secure dependability

SOLUTION

When considering possible solutions, Backcountry.com focused on open source. The company hoped to employ a system that would facilitate management and foster innovations. But that solution would also have to provide the dependability necessary for a company that cannot afford to face glitches or downtime. With the Red Hat open source system, the company was able to find that successful solution.

The company needed help with the challenge of keeping up with constant growth while maintaining scalability, simplicity, and agility. Backcountry.com chose Red Hat. "We at Backcountry.com believe in the open source story with speed and low-cost maintenance, and we use open source from top to bottom," Jenkins said. "We had certain goals that needed to be met. Open source and Red Hat fulfilled these goals more than any other solution."

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Flexibility and cost were also major factors in Backcountry.com's decision to work with Red Hat. "Solaris and Microsoft never even came into the equation," Jenkins said. "Red Hat was the only one even close to the ball park in terms of cost savings and flexibility." With Red Hat, Backcountry.com was able to adopt a system that would foster creativity and new ideas among its employees while

still being cost effective, dependable, and easily manageable.

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Currently Backcountry.com employs Red Hat Network, Red Hat Enterprise Linux 3 and 4, and Fedora 5. The company has been functioning on Red Hat operating systems since 2001. Before moving to Red Hat solutions, the company was running on a small scale. But they started with open source from the ground up.

"Every year there is a crop of servers that need Red Hat Enterprise Linux installed on them," Jenkins said. "But it is easy for us. We just take a day to install Red Hat and it is up and working the next day."

BENEFITS

Backcountry.com has seen many benefits after implementing of Red Hat solutions, including cost savings, flexibility, and ease of use. These were all major factors in the decision to implement Red Hat, and these benefits have helped Backcountry.com in its success in the e-commerce business.

While Jenkins noted that the company had considered downloading the free version of the software, he recognized the great importance of support and updates available with a Red Hat subscription.

The Red Hat updates, along with Backcountry.com's subscription to Red Hat Network, have

been invaluable to Jenkins. "Red Hat Network is absolutely crucial to the whole equation," Jenkins said. "This is a distinctive factor for companies when deciding to go with Red Hat. We could have a good platform with other solutions, but would we be getting updates with a simple point and click? No way."

Jenkins also appreciates the stability and reliability provided. "Our systems are never broken, and that's the beauty of having Red Hat solutions. We have never had to call tech support with Red Hat because we haven't had any problems," Jenkins said. "The question has come up as to why we bought Red Hat Enterprise Linux with the tech support because it hasn't been used at all. One day if we have to call Red Hat because we are in a panic and it is costing us thousands of dollars in lost sales, trust me, everyone will be thankful for having spent the money on the support."

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It is also important to Backcountry.com that it has a secure and easy-to-use system for their customer service representatives. With Fedora 5, Backcountry.com doesn't have to worry as much about viruses and other security issues. "Our customer representatives are talking to thousands of people and receiving mail from anyone and everyone," Jenkins said. "Because they are using Fedora, I am not worried about viruses at all, which is a huge weight off my shoulders."

In a booming e-commerce business, Backcountry.com has little room for glitches. And that's why the company's adoption of Red Hat solutions has been extremely successful.

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"It has been completely painless, the updates have been consistent and regular, and it has been an invisible part of our network, which I think any infrastructure provider would aspire to," Jenkins said. "There is no question about our future use of Red Hat. We get the servers, we put Red Hat Enterprise Linux on them, and then we format from there. That is now the extent of our conversations."

