



FamilySearch

INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

ViaWest supports the innovation and growth of a genealogical research trailblazer

VIAWEST SERVICES

Colocation services

Scenario

Central to the beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is the doctrine that teaches that marriage and families can continue beyond this life. Genealogical or family history research is essential to LDS members so that religious ordinances can be performed for their deceased ancestors. That was the impetus behind the creation of FamilySearch.org, an LDS undertaking, now the largest genealogy organization in the world.

For over 100 years, FamilySearch has been actively gathering, preserving, and sharing genealogical records worldwide. In 2003 FamilySearch began looking for a hosting provider that could offer stability for its small but growing operation and found ViaWest. In 2005 FamilySearch hired, Rich Bushell, the operations manager of the organization's data centers, who leveraged ViaWest flexibility to support the on-going growth of FamilySearch.

FamilySearch is a collection of several large databases: the International Genealogical Index, or IGI, which includes both data extracted from filmed civil and ecclesiastic records from various worldwide locales and member-submitted information; the Ancestral File, or AF, which includes the contributions of church members and the Pedigree Resource File, or PRF, compiled from of Latter-day Saints church members and non-member submissions.

Business Challenge

FamilySearch data was originally hosted in several

church buildings, none of them true data centers. The facilities of those buildings were subject to the same risks of any other institutional building. If the air conditioning went out on a long weekend, for example, servers could be at risk. As the pace of development quickened in the years that followed, hosting needs kept pace. "FamilySearch started with two cabinets and grew to nearly 5000 square feet while our data sets grew from a couple of Terabytes to over two Petabytes today," Bushell explained.

Solution

A testament to the flexibility of the ViaWest solution, FamilySearch has grown from using two cabinets, to six rows, and most recently to eleven rows in roughly the same area. "We didn't have any growth constraints and ViaWest didn't put their real estate needs ahead of my needs to grow," commented Bushell. "The account people were engaged in what we were intending to do and thinking about what we could do when others vacate. I felt like my ViaWest team was a real partner."

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As an example, as FamilySearch prepared for the full release of its product, they needed more storage capabilities to support the launch. "Management allowed us first right of refusal and went ahead and reserved a cage that looked like it would work for us before I even asked them to," Bushell said. "The space was a little bigger than I

needed, but that allowed me flexibility to build in ways that supported our changing business needs. ViaWest also partnered with me in creating and analyzing models of our cage space."

That flexibility allowed Bushell to design an innovative computer room air conditioning unit (CRAC) configuration



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that allowed FamilySearch to realize more value from its space. "The model showed that if we put the CRAC unit perpendicular to where you'd normally put a CRAC, out twenty to twenty-five feet from the wall, it would create enough pressure on the on the sides of the unit to support more equipment and the space could be used more efficiently," Bushell explained.

That sense of partnership with the ViaWest account team that prevailed through good times, held true in challenging times as well. "We had open, frank conversations when things were going well and when things were difficult," Bushell asserted. "When the fire suppression system inadvertently discharged during annual maintenance,

triggering a thermal event and ruining hundreds of hard drives, ViaWest kept its partner posture instead of getting defensive, which would have been fully justified. I felt confident all through the process, from how the problem was evaluated, the temporary steps that ViaWest put into place to mitigate the problem, and the long-term solution."

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That long-term solution has helped FamilySearch to cement its place as a trailblazer in the genealogy research arena. "As a non-profit, we are not trying to capture market space. But, we want to be successful because we are helping

the genealogy research expand to the point of getting global attention. Ten years ago genealogy research wasn't even on the map, now it's a thriving industry."

WHY VIAWEST

ViaWest is one of the largest privately held data center service providers in North America. We provide colocation, hosting, and managed services to businesses of all sizes nationwide. ViaWest owns and operates 22 enterprise-class data center facilities in Colorado, Texas, Oregon, Utah, and Nevada, delivering high-quality, flexible solutions designed to support customers' unique business needs. ViaWest customers include Frontier Airlines, Red Robin, Chipotle, and Northrop Grumman. For additional information on ViaWest, please visit www.viawest.com or call 1-877-448-9378.