

Windows Azure

Partner Solution Case Study



Developer Expands Business with Cloud-Based Hosting and Saves 80 Percent in Costs

Customer: Composite
Website: www.composite.net
Customer Size: 8 employees
Country or Region: Denmark
Industry: Software engineering

Customer Profile

Based in Copenhagen, Denmark, Composite is a Microsoft Certified Partner that is the developer of Composite C1, an open source, web content management system based on Microsoft .NET technology.

Software and Services

- Windows Azure Platform
 - Windows Azure
- Technologies
 - Microsoft .NET Framework 4.0

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Marcus Wendt, Product Manager, Composite

Composite, a content management system (CMS) developer, consistently aims to help its customers, many of which often struggled to find reliable hosting for their websites. Composite turned to Windows Azure, and developed an application programming interface that enables customers to quickly deploy their site to the Windows Azure technology platform. As a result, Composite can offer a reliable hosting solution to its customers while saving 80 percent on on-premises infrastructure costs.

Business Needs

Composite is an independent software vendor and web value-added provider that develops a content management system (CMS) that enables organizations or individuals to easily publish, manage, and organize content for their websites. When the company was founded in 1999 in Copenhagen, Denmark, it developed its first version of the CMS on COM, COM+, and Microsoft ASP.

Inspired by other open source CMS products that were gaining popularity, Composite moved to an open source

development model in 2009 and developed Composite C1 based on the Microsoft .NET Framework 4.0. Composite C1 is popular among small and medium-sized businesses, such as Mobility Architects, a four-employee company that helps businesses integrate mobile technology into their IT infrastructure. Composite offers the CMS not only under the open source model, but also under a licensed model that includes service and support, as well as commercial extensions, including an extranet feature.

Though it offered a solution that met



customers' needs for a CMS, the company recognized that many of its small and medium-sized customers struggled to find reliable, cost-effective hosting partners. "Setting up Composite is easy, but finding a hosting partner is much more difficult," explains Marcus Wendt, Product Manager at Composite. "It's a gap in our offering—customers have a content management system, but then either have to build their own infrastructure, which is expensive, or evaluate a nearly limitless pool of hosting partners to meet their needs. Both options pose significant hurdles for our customers."

With only eight employees itself, Composite was not in a position to invest the time and money into building its own infrastructure to become a hosting provider. Composite decided to explore cloud computing as a way to offer a cost-effective hosting environment for its customers, thereby creating a comprehensive solution for websites for smaller businesses.

Solution

Composite evaluated multiple cloud services providers, including Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) and Google App Engine, but chose to develop its CMS deployment tool for Windows Azure, which serves as the Microsoft cloud services development, hosting, and management environment.

"We chose Windows Azure because Google's offering did not interoperate seamlessly with our .NET-based CMS, and Amazon's offering is more a virtual server environment than a managed cloud platform," says Wendt. "In both cases we would have had significantly more work to do than with Windows Azure, whether additional development efforts or ongoing infrastructure maintenance. Windows Azure

works with our existing CMS and is highly scalable, so it was the best choice."

Composite developed an application programming interface (API) that enables customers to quickly deploy websites built on Composite C1 to Windows Azure. With the API, customers can deploy a website to Windows Azure by completing just a few quick steps after signing up for a Windows Azure account. A customer simply compresses its website into a .zip file and uploads it to Blob Storage in Windows Azure. The website is then deployed into a web role in Windows Azure and, with a simple change to a configuration file, the website is live. "Deploying our website to Windows Azure is quick and easy," says Anders Heick, Co-Founder of Mobility Architects, a Composite customer. "We can take advantage of an enterprise-level infrastructure with minimal investment, and instead stay focused on our business."

The company released its deployment API for Composite C1 in March 2011 and is preparing to take its self-service hosting option a step further by providing customers with a managed deployment option, in which customers can upload their websites directly to Composite, which will then deploy the site to Windows Azure for the customer.

Benefits

As a result of developing for Windows Azure, Composite now has a cost-effective, reliable hosting solution to offer its customers. Specifically, the company has:

- **Expanded its business without adding infrastructure costs.** By using Windows Azure, Composite avoids expensive infrastructure costs and offers its customers reliable hosting services for

websites that take advantage of the Composite C1 CMS. "If we had to build our own data center, we estimate it would have cost U.S.\$244,000 over a three-year period," explains Wendt. "With Windows Azure, our total cost of ownership over the same period is only \$47,000. That 80-percent savings is the only reason this was viable for us."

- **Improved website performance for customers.** Since moving their Composite C1 websites to Windows Azure, customers have reported increases in page loading times and overall performance. "With our move to Windows Azure, we have noted a performance increase up to three times that of our previous hosting environment," says Heick. "Plus, we were able to make the improvement without taking resources away from our core business."
- **Discovered revenue opportunities.** Composite offers a self-service API for customers to host their sites on Windows Azure, but quickly realized that it could also offer customers a full-service option for deploying websites to the cloud. Because Windows Azure is a fully managed cloud platform, Composite would not be saddled with infrastructure management tasks, which would typically prove too costly and time-consuming for the small company to manage. "We will use multi-tenant architecture that Windows Azure offers, running multiple websites in a single web role, which will give us the ability to offer competitive hosting prices," says Wendt. We expect that to be a great revenue stream, and one that we wouldn't have considered without Windows Azure."