

CASE STUDY

Loyalty Services

Web Drive makes quality hosting easy for Loyalty Services.

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When the operator of one of New Zealand's most popular loyalty rewards programmes needed a hosting service provider to support its business, it discovered that Web Drive could not only meet its specifications but could also do so rapidly and with a minimum of fuss. And, a year after switching to Web Drive, Auckland's Loyalty Services has come to trust Web Drive for high-performance, reliable and dependable web hosting.

Loyalty Services operates a number of loyalty and redemption programmes including FrenzCard. The FrenzCard concept is unique, extending participation to all retailers whether large or small, and has operated successfully since late 2007.

According to Loyalty Services MD Brian Collins, hosting of the company's services is a critical component of its business. "It's fair to say that this is where the business lives and happens," he notes. "That's because our servers support the value proposition of 'real benefits in real time'. When a customer swipes their FrenzCard, it has to be processed in real time, as in many cases points are redeemable immediately against a purchase."

Explaining how the programme works, Collins says every time a customer swipes their card at a retailer, information is written to its databases. "It is a prerequisite that wherever we placed our servers and databases, they should have the ability to communicate with the EFTPOS network."

Big bureaucracy from big name providers

With such a premium placed on availability – Collins confirms that its servers must be available any time a customer might shop – he says Loyalty Services initially looked to 'big name' hosting services providers. However, while such providers are certainly up to the task, he says a limitation of a different sort quickly became apparent.

"We were absolutely astounded by the levels of complexity and bureaucracy involved in establishing a relationship and attendant service level agreements in place," he relates.

But that wasn't the only challenge; the costs involved were also prohibitive. With such an onerous, time-consuming and potentially expensive process facing the company, Collins says Loyalty Services started to look further afield. "We considered some overseas service providers, but that also wasn't ideal – we wanted instantaneous communications to support our business goals and felt a local service provider was the best option."

That's what led the company to Web Drive. "Our IT manager was aware of the company, so we thought 'let's give them a call!'"

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'Can do' attitude

Good thing too, says Collins. "Immediately, what we experienced was chalk and cheese. Instead of making the hosting of our systems more of a hassle, Web Drive made it their problem, not ours. The level of technical ability was impressive, too. They very quickly established what was required, how our business model operates and what is necessary to support it from a hosting point of view, and got to sorting out the necessary structures."

He is upfront about the fact that Loyalty Services is a demanding customer. "We were working to very tight deadlines to get up and running, something that just wasn't an issue for Web Drive," Collins says.

But it is the 'can do' attitude which Web Drive brings to the table which made all the difference. "When you look for a service provider, you want problems to be taken care of, not for new ones to bother you. That's what we found with Web Drive."

Partnering for success

The hosting for Loyalty Services is just the kind of challenge the company enjoys, reveals Neil Webster, Web Drive sales manager. "Our specialty is complex environments which have numerous touch points. In this case, with the FrenzCard system operating in conjunction with the EFTPOS network, some specific work to meet the appropriate standards was required," he says.

Webster also notes that a very high level of availability was considered essential to Loyalty Services. "Our standard SLA guarantees 99.9% uptime, so this was something we were quite capable of delivering."

As a growing business with ambitions of further extending what is a proven concept, he says partnerships with dependable service providers considered fundamental to success. "Simply put, we would not operate as efficiently if we didn't have the facilities from Web Drive. It's not only the technical ability, either - it is the level of service, attention to detail and plain business sense that it brings to our organisation as part of the package. We needed a nimble, interested partner - and that is what Web Drive provided."