White paper

Maximizing your Sitecore investment with Rackspace and Azure

Creating customers for life

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Introduction

In the age of the customer, your online visitors expect an engaging, personalized and responsive experience. If they don't get immediate satisfaction, there are plenty of other destinations across the web. Keeping the customer interaction optimized and directed toward a marketing goal is the underlying reason you invest in your digital platform.

Sitecore® is built from the ground up as a single, connected solution to deliver automated, flexible and personalized customer experience management. By deploying Sitecore on Azure®, you get a solution that is scalable, reliable and secure.

While powerful, Sitecore on Azure can be complex. Maintaining the health of the platform requires specialized skills and knowledge. Therefore, the challenge is to capture the benefits without spending time deploying and operating the technology and losing your focus on the customer experience.

When deploying Sitecore on Azure, having a managed hosting provider with the expertise to architect, optimize and support your environment is key — so you and your creative partners can focus on engaging features and content, not infrastructure. The foundation of positive customer experiences lies in the technology and the people who run it.

Cloud deployment of Sitecore

Traditionally, businesses have deployed their CMS on-premises, which requires dedicated hardware with enough capacity to handle any usage bursts. The rigid nature of a traditional, dedicated server infrastructure meant that resources were always over- or under-provisioned. In fact, most storage systems deployed to support virtualized environments are only 20-30% utilized from a capacity perspective.

This on-premises environment also faces a procurement challenge. In most cases, the larger the organization, the more red tape and time involved when it comes to the procurement and deployment of any IT solution. In order to meet deployment schedules and avoid procurement delays due to multiple requests, IT managers purchase everything they think they need in one transaction, purchasing at the very high end of their estimates. The result is overspending on infrastructure they don't end up using. In fact, research from McKinsey & Co. found that, on average, large IT projects run 45% over budget and 7% over time, while delivering 56% less value than predicted.

The final common issue with on-premises deployments is the cost of maintaining the infrastructure once deployed. It takes continual attention from IT, with constant software patching, updating and monitoring to ensure the hardware is running reliably. So instead of spending time on more valuable IT activities such as deploying new productivity tools, IT resources spend inordinate amounts of time and money on these mundane but necessary tasks.

The natural solution is to take advantage of the economy of scale that cloud computing and managed service providers can offer. Partnering with a managed service provider like Rackspace will help reduce your IT burden. Rackspace provides day-to-day management, optimization and deployment of new Sitecore workloads, updates and patching. This allows you to reduce IT budget while spending on other strategic applications to move your business forward.

Why Sitecore Platform Manager on Microsoft Azure?

Businesses choosing to deploy their Sitecore platform solution on Azure are realizing competitive advantages over rivals with traditional on-premises deployments. Some of the advantages are:

Speed to market: Instead of having to procure and build out infrastructure on your own, with Azure you can easily provision cloud resources for Sitecore modules in minutes.

What is downtime costing you?

According to an industry report from Channel Insider:

- The average cost of data center downtime across industries was approximately $5,600 per minute.

- The average reported incident length was 90 minutes, resulting in an average cost per incident of approximately $505,500.

- For a total data center outage, which had an average recovery time of 134 minutes, average costs were approximately $680,000.

- For a partial data center outage, which averaged 59 minutes in length, average costs were approximately $258,000.

High availability: Azure offers enterprise-grade SLAs on services, around-the-clock service health monitoring and 50 geo-redundant regions around the world.

Scalability: Azure can scale up as demand increases or down when you no longer need that extra push. Azure PaaS also provides an ideal cloud environment for test, development and proof-of-concept scenarios, eliminating the need to spend budget on infrastructure that will sit idle when not needed.

Free your IT teams: Maintaining and optimizing a cloud environment can result in additional cycles and headaches for your IT team. Furthermore, without the right expertise, the process for migrating on-premises applications into the cloud can be complicated and result in failed implementations. With Azure from Rackspace, these headaches and worries disappear as your infrastructure is managed for you.

Predictable costs: Azure utilizes a pay-as-you-go model with per-minute billing rates and aggressive pricing for services like compute, storage and bandwidth, delivering true value for your investment.

Flexibility: Microsoft offers the flexibility of running entirely in Azure public cloud, hybrid cloud or private cloud, depending on your needs. It also supports the largest selection of operating systems, programming languages, frameworks, tools, databases and devices.

Monitoring: With Azure, Microsoft's unified management capability means you and Rackspace can always get a single view across all your environments. Should something happen, Rackspace can automatically isolate the issue for quick remediation.

How can Rackspace help you?

It takes more than just servers and support to deliver a successful Sitecore on Azure solution. Rackspace is unlike any other service provider in the content-delivery space because we offer a full range of solutions to run Sitecore and the supporting ecosystem effectively. When it comes to Sitecore on Azure, Rackspace is the leader:

Expertise: Five-time Microsoft Hosting Partner of the Year, with 500+ Certified Microsoft Professionals available 24x7x365 for "future-proof" architecture guidance and management of your Azure infrastructure for a wide range of Sitecore deployments.

Multicloud-ready: Flexible design to scale to workload variability, ease of multicloud cloud integration and management between hosted private, on-premises and Azure environments.

Cost and resource optimization: With years of practical experience delivering Azure and Sitecore, Rackspace knows exactly how to architect a flexible Sitecore platform that delivers the performance and stability you need, at the lowest possible cost.

Specialized Sitecore expertise with Rackspace Application Services

An optional add-on to our Fanatical Support for Azure offering, Rackspace Application Services (RAS) Digital Experience provides solutions specific to Sitecore XP, XM and Commerce, and extends our monitoring, alerting and support up through the Sitecore platform and any supporting .NET or Java applications (e.g., SOLR, MongoDB, Coveo). Many other hosting providers lack specialized Sitecore engineers, but Rackspace deploys Sitecore architects led by a Sitecore MVP to support your platform and budget.

Always-on support

Fanatical Support® for Microsoft Azure is designed to assist you across the entire lifecycle of enterprise applications — including planning, architectural guidance, migrations and implementation support for customers to run production workloads. We offer the following:

Architectural and application deployment guidance: Get guidance on designing a cloud environment that meets your unique workload requirements.

Support engineers available 24x7x365: Chat, phone and ticket support is available any time — day or night — so you always get the help you need.

Account management: Get a dedicated customer success manager who knows you and your workloads and is there when you need help.

SLA guarantee: Our engineers respond in as little as 15 minutes, depending on the severity of the issue.

On-demand SQL DBA support: Purchase on-demand support by trained MS SQL DBAs to tackle complex scenarios and ensure maximum operation of your SQL instance in the cloud.

Launch assistance: Our specialists help get your cloud environment up and running smoothly and quickly.

Monitor, manage and maintain: We proactively monitor your guest OS, troubleshoot any issues that arise, and provide assistance with patching and upgrading.

Cloud services support: We help you choose the services that are best suited to your workload (such as load balancers, backup and monitoring) and add or remove services as needed.

Service to match your needs

Benefit from all that Azure has to offer with Rackspace services for Microsoft Azure.

Service Blocks: Rackspace Managed Public Cloud Service Blocks is a flexible offering that allows customers to build their own managed services, giving them the expertise they need when and where they need it.

Rackspace Managed Public Cloud for Azure provides tooling and access to human expertise, incorporating best practices and 24x7x365 operational support for your Azure environment. Our managed services for Azure are for customers who need a comprehensive support experience that offers infrastructure management as a service. We will perform environment build and deployment activities in addition to ongoing management of your digital platform's PaaS services, and if needed your IaaS VM assets (monitoring, patching and antivirus).

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Digital Experience Application Operations for Sitecore: Available through Rackspace Application Services (RAS) as an optional, add-on service for Managed Cloud customers, Digital Experience Application Operations for Sitecore extends Fanatical Support up the stack to the application layer. This service provides application expertise, performance monitoring and proactive support for your mission-critical websites and applications. Application Operations for Digital Apps leverages industry-leading tools to enable end-to-end transaction visibility and real-time end-user experience monitoring, helping you cost-effectively meet uptime requirements for mission-critical applications. The service provides 24x7x365 support, automation, monitoring, alerting at the application tier, and manual intervention by Sitecore specialists in blocks of 10, 20 and 40 hours per month. Benefits include:

- A collaborative experience designed and maintained by battle-tested Sitecore architects and provided by a Sitecore Platinum Technology Partner

- Turnkey Sitecore environments: Sitecore is installed, security-hardened and tuned for stability and performance

- Road-map conversations, investigation and troubleshooting, and guidance with the Sitecore platform

- Emergency patching for Sitecore zero-day exploits

- Working with you to design and test disaster recovery scenarios

- Regular Sitecore assessments: configuration, code and best practices

Experience: Choose the industry leader in Rackspace

- A leader in the 2020 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Public Cloud Infrastructure Professional and Managed Services, Worldwide

- Five-time Microsoft Hosting Partner of the Year

- 20+ years hosting experience

- 1,500+ Microsoft certifications, including MCITPs, MCSAs, MCSE and MCTSs

- Named a Microsoft Azure Expert Managed Service Provider

Rackspace vs. unmanaged cloud providers

A Sitecore on Azure deployment with Rackspace includes many of the services that other hosting providers charge extra for, driving up the total cost of the solution (for infrastructure and support).

Unmanaged cloud providers require customers to pay for these services on an hourly basis or hire staff to do it themselves — neither provides the simplicity of Rackspace's managed cloud model.

Rackspace vs. do-it-yourself deployment

The traditional approach was to deploy and support everything yourself, on your site or in your data center. Today's cloud economics make a compelling financial case to look at things differently. In addition to a potential $500k savings vs. a DIY deployment, you also gain other benefits like high availability, dedicated support and peace of mind.

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The comparison chart below illustrates the TCO of an in-house IT solution versus a hosted and managed solution with Rackspace Application Services.

Site reliability engineers	In-house IT*	Rackspace services*
Annual Salary	$120,000 Per Engineer	Included
Shift - 3 (8 hour) Supporting 24x7x365	4x Engineers	Dedicated Team
ACtIT Staff Costs	$400,000	**Included**
Ongoing Training/Certification	$20,000	Included (Rackspace Employee Benefit)
Enterprise software	**Sitecore**	**Sitecore**
RAS Digital Experience for Sitecore Fee (Azure Infrastructure spend <$4K, 20 hours of RAS Time per month)		$11,250
Sitecore Fee ($250/Sitecore Server)	$1,500	
Infrastructure Monitoring	$50,000	
Application Performance Monitoring	$50,000	
Installation, Setup, Configuration (Hardware/Software)	$25,000	Included
Build vs. rent decision - total annual cost	**$643,000**	**$135,000**
Availability	3-6 months	Today (15 days)

*__Model based on__: Average of six Sitecore servers; average of one non-Sitecore server; average of two database servers; average of two net devices

Conclusion

The value Sitecore can bring to your business is significant — if you have the requisite skills and expertise to maximize your investment. This includes the initial design and implementation, deployment and management of Sitecore and Azure, and all the ongoing maintenance and monitoring. It's hard for an individual business to source and retain all the skills, expertise and infrastructure needed to run a highly available, scalable and secure environment that can meet customer expectations 24x7. By partnering with Rackspace, you can take advantage of our expertise, best practices and experience, allowing you to focus on web content, customer experience and revenue-generating activities instead of the underlying technology.

About Rackspace Technology

At Rackspace Technology, we accelerate the value of the cloud during every phase of digital transformation. By managing apps, data, security and multiple clouds, we are the best choice to help customers get to the cloud, innovate with new technologies and maximize their IT investments. As a recognized Gartner Magic Quadrant leader, we are uniquely positioned to close the gap between the complex reality of today and the promise of tomorrow. Passionate about customer success, we provide unbiased expertise, based on proven results, across all the leading technologies. And across every interaction worldwide, we deliver Fanatical Experience TM — the best customer service experience in the industry. Rackspace has been honored by Fortune, Forbes, Glassdoor and others as one of the best places to work.

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