

Miami Ad School Success Story

Web Hosting : Internet Access : Partner Programs : Security : Services

Customer	Miami Ad School
Business Problem	Managing Rapid Student Growth
Solution Summary	Virtual Private Server & Managed Private Server

Miami Educational Institution Utilizes NTT/VERIO Hosting Solutions to Serve Global Student Population

Customer Profile

Miami Ad School offers students an alternate advertising education to traditional universities; students gain highly-focused, hands-on advertising skills, such as writing for TV commercials, designing billboard ads, planning accounts and packaging products.

The Situation

Founded in 1993 with just seven students, Miami Ad School has grown its enrollment to more than 450 students at domestic campuses in Miami, San Francisco, New York, Minneapolis, and Chicago; and international campuses in Sao Paulo, Hamburg, Warsaw, Prague, London and Amsterdam – 11 campuses in all. In order to streamline many education-related processes for the school's geographically-distributed faculty and student population, Miami Ad School transitioned to an entirely Internet-based system, enabling students to perform nearly all school-related business online. In addition to the nearly 60 percent of new students who learn about the school and gather information from its Web site, students can access a course catalog online and use a secure intranet to receive and submit class assignments, while prospective students can even apply for admission to the institution online.

Clearly, the Web plays a major role in the School's operation and success, as does having a proven Web host partner that can deliver reliable hosting services. After rapid expansion, however, the School began experiencing less-than-stellar service from its existing provider. "It became increasingly obvious that our previous provider couldn't support our high growth rate," said Robert Taylor, director of technology for the Miami Ad School. "In addition to outages and downtime, slow service response was wreaking havoc in our IT organization. We knew we had to make a change and that we had to do it quickly."

With that, Taylor outlined the School's rigorous requirements, and set out to identify a new provider that could deliver a high-performance Web hosting solution, built to keep up with the institution's growth. In addition to scalability, reliability and cost-effectiveness, the School also required assistance with site

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migration. Ultimately, the provider partner would help Miami Ad School to grow its business, not its IT staff and infrastructure.

The Solution

After looking at several providers, the School selected Verio. "Aside from the company's reputation as a proven, high-performance provider, discussions with the technical support staff made it clear that Verio also had the know-how and high-touch customer support we need to continue on a path of growth," said Taylor.

Currently, the School uses NTT/VERIO Virtual Private Server (VPS), and Taylor feels the solution is ideal for his needs. "The scalability and flexibility of the VPS allows my team to continue to add functionality to the School's Web site, and we've been able to keep our IT staff to a minimum, which allows us to be agile in responding to trends in the market. The VPS allows us to focus on our business, while Verio handles the maintenance of the VPS."

NTT/VERIO VPS solutions are based on a breakthrough Web hosting technology that gives customers their own dedicated UNIX virtual machine – a private and protected area that operates as an independent server. The potential functions of a VPS are enormous: it can be used to display a simple Web site or house a complex e-commerce site back-ended by an advanced database. The VPS allows Miami Ad School to share the expense of hardware and network connections, without sacrificing performance or freedom of choice. The functionality can be extended as the School grows, and can be as basic or complex as Taylor needs it to be.

The School also moved its student intranet to an NTT/VERIO Managed Private Server (MPS) plan. The Solaris-based MPS provides a hosting solution comprised of hardware, software, and managed services, and gives Taylor the ability to load custom applications.

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To ensure the smooth transition of the site from its previous location into the NTT/VERIO data center, Miami Ad School enlisted the services of Verio's Custom Web Solutions (CWS) team. CWS assisted with the migration of the site to an NTT/

VERIO VPS, performing multiple structural and code changes required to make the site run well on a UNIX platform.

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Verio CWS also installed additional code to help reduce the administrative duties of Taylor's team:

- **Automated Email Account Creation.** Previously, the process for creating new accounts was done manually, but new enhancements have allowed for automated account creation.
- **Streamlining User IDs.** Duplicate user IDs were cleared, and code updates will prevent the creation of duplicate user IDs in the future.
- **Site Organization.** With changes and improved organization of the Portfolio Area, where students display their work, makes it easier for prospective employers to navigate and view students' accomplishments.

The quality and level of support has also been a key benefit for Miami Ad School. "Verio's customer and technical support has made the whole transition in the Verio data center a lot easier than expected," says Taylor. "The combination of knowledgeable staff, responsive service, and a great attitude has made the entire project a success."

The Future

The School has been approached to expand into a variety of countries worldwide, including Greece, Mexico, Turkey, China, South Korea, Canada, Bucharest, Amsterdam, Argentina, and Colombia. As the School continues to grow, its Web presence will need to scale and grow to meet evolving volume and functionality needs, and Taylor is confident that Verio will play a key role in this expansion.

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About Miami Ad School

Convinced that education for creative positions in the advertising professions was behind the times, Miami Ad School was founded based on the concept of the first "portfolio school." This hands-on approach enables would-be copywriters, art directors and graphic designers to learn relevant skills while building a professional-quality portfolio. The result is an alternate educational method that is more realistic and effective, enabling graduates to go immediately to work without additional training. The Miami Ad School also offers students the chance to spend a quarter term working in local agencies by day and attending class at night. Participating agencies pay one-half of a student's tuition and pick up housing costs. The School has won 39 awards in international competitions this year, more than any other advertising school.

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