



ATHEIST BERLIN

CLOUDWAYS MENDS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM OF ATHEIST BERLIN: WEBSITE HOSTING

With a complex website based on Magento and WordPress, Atheist Berlin suffered growth pains whenever traffic spiked. Read how Cloudways helped them.

ABOUT ATHEIST BERLIN

ORIGIN:

Germany

BUSINESS:

Shoe making

FOUNDER:

David Bonney

APPLICATIONS:

Magento & WordPress

PROBLEM:

Wanted a hosting solution which should keep the website performing all the time especially when there is a surge in traffic

SOLUTION:

Cloudways crafted a specialized hosting solution after thoroughly analyzing Atheist Berlin's traffic history

OUTCOME:

The website has 99.99% uptime.

**“ I’m a godless shoemaker and I’ve made an atheist shoe...
What do you think? ”**



When David Bonney posted this line as subject to a thread—a conversation—on Reddit, a popular community website, he would have never thought that his idea would become so successful. No one taught him to become a cobbler; he learned the art of shoemaking all by himself.

In the spring of 2012, David took his idea to Kickstarter.com in hopes of getting it funded. In a matter of days, his project was completely funded by total strangers on Kickstarter.com. In June 2012, he launched the website for his shoe brand www.atheistberlin.com and started serving his customers from his workshop in Berlin, Germany.

CHALLENGE

Atheist Berlin's success on Kickstarter created a marketing buzz for the brand. Coupled with great quality product, the shoe brand started to grow by leaps and bounds. Initially, Atheist Berlin was hosted on a Virtual Private Server (VPS) which had a quad-core CPU. It ran on 4 GB RAM, extendable to only 8 GB, with just 200 GB of hard disk space.

In its early days, Atheist Berlin used to receive a small, manageable amount of traffic, centering around 150 visitors per day. The website, hosted on VPS, worked at a very slow speed and was barely able to handle the job at hand. Eventually, the rising number of visitors caused the VPS to crash.

The site developers then installed a web accelerator, Varnish, as a safety measure to tackle the growing flow of visitors. This improved the situation considerably, especially when they ran marketing campaigns. The server was able to sustain 900 concurrent users at a time. However, as the word spread further about Atheist Berlin's unique shoemaking philosophy, this measure also fell short.

“ Our biggest fear is the ridiculous amount of traffic on a given day,” said David. “There were days when I wished there was a better way to do this. ”

The organization then realized the need for a hosting platform that could be relied upon for effectively handling thousands of daily visitors.

To top it all, Atheist Berlin learned that their e-mail campaigns were landing in the Spam folder. **“Our previous hosting company had some dodgy sites that seemed to be sending out spam. As a result, all our emails were marked as spam and rarely made it to people's inboxes,”** complained David.

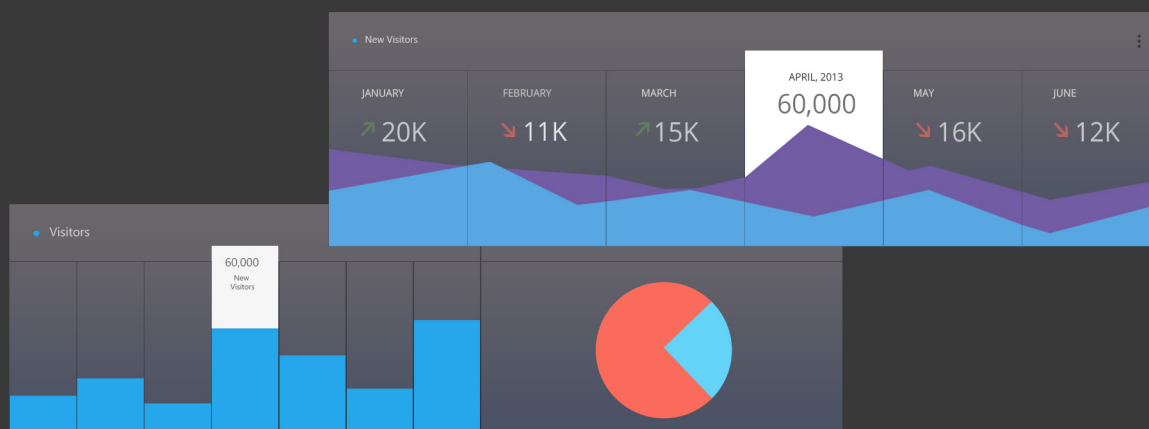
SOLUTION

So, David and his team started searching for a reliable and clean hosting platform that could help them in managing the growing inflow of traffic.

“ Someone told me about Cloudways,” said David. “I studied all my options over the internet. And, then I checked them out and the pricing plans were totally within our budget. However, what really grabbed me was just how personal and detailed their support was. From our first email, they were quick to answer all of our questions in great detail, always with the name of the person you were corresponding with and with rarely any waiting time. ”

The team at Atheist Berlin told Cloudways that the main reason they were seeking help was to mitigate the persistent fear of traffic hitting unbearably high levels every once in a while, resulting in long downtimes. The folks at Atheist Berlin further explained:

“ It's happened before: Last April, we had a huge PR story break and it led to something like 60,000 new visitors in one day, with the usual traffic being 500 to 1,000 at any one time. Naturally enough, things went down and we installed Varnish as an emergency measure. ”



Another factor which was troubling the developers was that Atheist Berlin's backend had been customized to accommodate both Magento and WordPress. Their store was developed on Magento, whereas their blog was functioning on WordPress.

They were worried that this would cause problems during server transition and automatic application updates. This is how David Bonney, founder of Atheist Berlin, described the scenario to us:

“ It's good that Cloudways automatically upgrades our Magento and WordPress systems so that they are always up-to-date. But, we unfortunately had to change some core Magento files to get it working with WordPress. So, this means we can't simply update Magento or WordPress. If we do, the website might crash. ”

OUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Sensing immense anxiety in David's words, our team at Cloudways immediately drew up a customized cloud hosting solution for the shoe-maker's unique problem. We suggested the Custom-made plan which caters to business websites with complex traffic requirements.

Furthermore, it was identified that previously there existed a gap between Atheist Berlin's development team and its hosting company. Therefore, we suggested to work alongside the development team assigned by Atheist Berlin.

Our team at Cloudways further suggested setting up a single server with the option of vertical scaling and even moving them to auto-scaling, if required. We communicated that all this was possible because Cloudways has a dedicated team of cloud engineers to help Atheist Berlin achieve its goals.

PREPPING FOR STABILITY

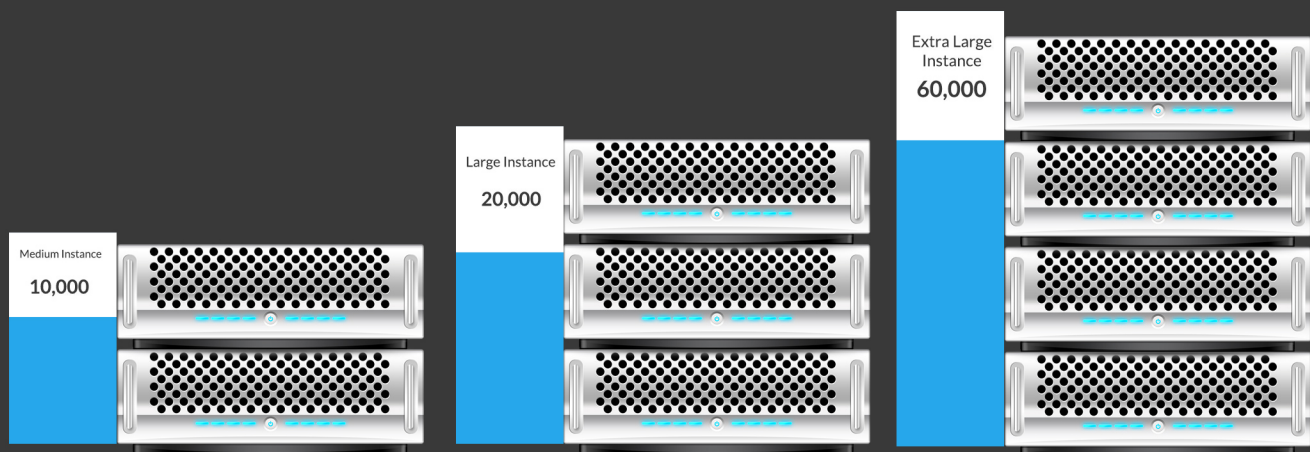
After a series of online interactions between Atheist Berlin and Cloudways, our team developed a clear understanding of the client's needs and the nature of its business.

We knew that even installing Varnish won't help much with a single server. A scalable setup was the need of the hour. However, we also understood that in most cases, our client's traffic bursts were the result of their marketing campaigns, and could, therefore, be predicted. Moreover, the option of auto-scalability was too expensive for the requirements at hand.

Auto-scaling is viable mostly with companies that have large-sized budgets for cloud hosting. In order to deploy auto-scaling, a web stack is divided into three servers: a web server, a database server, and one is kept on stand-by. Then a load balancer is added in front of the web servers and auto-scaling setup. This is the choicest hosting solution for big websites.

Cloudways suggested a smart, yet affordable solution. Instead of auto-scaling, which the client had initially inquired for, we proposed manual scaling of the servers.

The plan was simple: Every time Atheist Berlin conducted a publicity campaign, they would let us know beforehand and we would quickly scale the server vertically (from medium to large, to extra large, to double extra large—whatever the need be) to accommodate the expected surge of visitors.



Opting for manual rather than auto-scaling solved two problems: It saved our client the higher costs of automation and helped it implement a more effective solution. This is so because manual scaling allows servers to be scaled up to any desired extent at will – which was viable considering the predictable nature of traffic spikes for Atheist Berlin. Meanwhile, auto-scaling requires a larger capacity of servers to be usually fixed. This means that the low traffic prevailing for most of the time would leave the extra servers unused.

COURSE OF ACTION

We always think clear and simple at Cloudways. We informed Atheist Berlin that we intended to go about resolving their issue in a few simple steps:

- Migrate the website without any changes.
- Clone the server on Amazon.
- Try to upgrade software on the cloned Amazon server.
- If possible, we would help them (at agreed time) to synchronize final data from live server and switch the IP to new updated server and (after few days) delete the old version of the server.
- If not possible—and issues with custom code persist, then we would rethink our options.

OUTCOME

The plan worked without a hitch. Atheist Berlin's website was migrated as planned and the custom code was not disturbed.

Once the website started performing, the online shoe-making venture acknowledged a clear difference of moving to Cloudways. Their website now stays live all the time.

Plus, thanks to our super-optimized VMAN formula, the website loads faster, allowing Atheist Berlin to serve more customers concurrently as compared to their last hosting provider.

Our VMAN technology is a unique optimization formula which is made up of the benefiting features of Varnish, Memcached, Apache, and Nginx. This unique formula decreases page loading time by optimizing caching mechanism. This is why websites hosted on Cloudways respond up to 50% faster when compared with other hosting providers.

Gone are the days when David used to worry about website crashing down. Thanks to a manual scaling setup, Atheist Berlin does not face unexpected downtimes anymore.



“ Cloudways solved all of our unique problems” said a very satisfied David. “Rather than a ‘sorry, we can’t do this’ approach, they genuinely thought about whether they had the ability to meet our unique demands and, in every case, they figured out a way to help us. And, that’s how good business should be! You help each other to grow and you create working relationships that you hope will carry on for as long as you need them. The last thing I want is to go searching for another hosting company. ”

FINAL WORDS

Cloudways aims to deliver convenience to its customers, so they can focus at their real goals.

“ Life's too short, and...” said a very reflective David. “I would rather spend it thinking about shoe designs. With Cloudways, I’m optimistic they’ll be the last hosting platform we’ll ever need. ”

CONTACT US

Cloudways
join@cloudways.com
+44 3300 010 338
52 Springvale, Pope Pius XII Street
Mosta, MST2653 Malta

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