



CASE STUDY

BUSINESS-CLASS WEB HOSTING / COLOCATION / CONNECTIVITY / CONSULTING

WHITE HOUSE CUSTOM COLOR MANAGES DRAMATIC GROWTH WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY FROM VISI

THE COMPANY

After decades of focusing on film photography, White House Custom Color began offering digital prints for professional photographers more than five years ago. To handle significant growth, the digital photo laboratory moved into a larger facility in June 2004.

White House, which works with portrait and wedding photographers around the country, employs 125 people. Since focusing on digital photography, the company has experienced an astonishing annual growth rate of 85 to 90 percent.

The Business Journal ranked White House in eighth place on its 2006 list of the region's fastest growing companies. White House was in 254th place in 2006 on Inc. Magazine's prestigious ranking of the 500 fastest growing small companies in the nation.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2002, White House's DSL provider dropped a bombshell: The company, a national wireless provider, said that it would no longer be offering DSL service to customers. "They gave us only 60 days to find a new carrier," says Chris Hanline, the company's Chief Technology Officer. "Based on our timetable, we began to look for a good local provider who could get the transition done quickly."

Hanline needed a few other things out of a local connectivity provider: He wanted to work with a provider who could scale up their service offerings to handle White House's explosive growth. And he wanted a friendly staff of technologists who would understand his questions and respond quickly to any issues that arose.

One of the issues the company deals with is having enough bandwidth to accommodate large files sent by clients. The files hold dozens of photographs that White House reproduces on paper and canvas. A large amount of bandwidth is required, especially in autumn, when the business substantially increases.

VISI's expertise would prove important as White House moved its headquarters and gained popularity as a go-to supplier of digital images for professional photographers.

THE SOLUTION

Hanline had heard about VISI and gave the company a call in 2002. VISI recommended a T1 line to take the place of the former DSL carrier. "They got the T1 up and running with enough time to give us two weeks to spare in the end," recalls Hanline. "It was a pretty graceful transition from one carrier to the other."

The T1 had little trouble handling the workload of White House, and Hanline found VISI to be much more service-oriented than his former carrier. He believes that the national carrier saw White House as a minor customer unworthy of great service.

In contrast, the VISI staff checked with him frequently and closely monitored the T1 line's traffic levels and data transfer rates. "We really noticed the better service, much better than we ever experienced with the large company we had worked with before," says Hanline.

By 2004 it had become clear White House could no longer continue working in the cramped confines of their current location. When the decision came to move to a larger facility, Hanline brought in VISI for a consultation on a connectivity upgrade. The result? With the firm gaining more traffic seemingly by the hour, VISI's staff suggested the installation of four T1 lines in White House's new offices.

The four T1 lines worked well, but White House quickly outgrew them. VISI had recently acquired a new technology called "VISI Metro Optical Ethernet" (or VMOE). VMOE – a product provided in partnership with Qwest – requires that a physical fiber cable operate from the service provider's headquarters to the White House office.

The advantages of VMOE are numerous. It is ideal for such data applications as Internet access, data file transfer and off-site data storage. It's a fast, secure, high-quality connection that eliminates the need for specialized wide area network support expertise. And it would prove less expensive than the four T1 lines while requiring no additional circuits.

"At equal amounts of bandwidth, and at our location, the four T1 lines cost us more per megabit than the VMOE solution did," says Hanline.

Hanline recalls White House received a deal from VISI to maintain the T1 lines as a backup just in case the VMOE failed to function at any point. "We kept the T1s for a couple of months but then realized we really didn't need them as a backup, the system worked just fine," he says.

THE RESULTS

What Hanline likes about VMOE is that VISI charges White House based on a tiered system – he can ask for more bandwidth (and, of course, pay for it) if business increases. As it turns out, that is exactly what has been happening. In August 2005 White House was at a 12 Mbps tier. A year later it was up to 21 Mbps.

"We keep hitting our higher caps," he says. "But that's what is great about this system. VISI will add to our bandwidth to meet our growing demands – our VMOE transfers two to three megabyte digital pictures every second now."

White House continues to see business flourish as photographers use it and discover "we're better, faster and less expensive than anyone else in the field," says Hanline. And VISI has been a strong component in that success. "I like that when I call them up I end up talking to a real person," he says. "We were one of their earlier customers on the VMOE and we soon discovered VMOE was a great idea for our business. We've had no trouble with the line at all, no problems to speak of."

"No customer has ever complained about our service or sending files to us. And that says a lot about the excellent work of VISI."

WHAT IS VMOE?

VISI Metro Optical Ethernet (VMOE) is a service offered in partnership with Qwest. The architecture merges optical and Ethernet technology to provide a faster gateway for data transport. It addresses the issues posed by legacy SONET/SDH metro networks.

If your business has multiple offices with local area networks (LANs) that need to be connected with a high bandwidth connection, then VMOE could be perfect for you. The technology excels at offering your employees fast Internet access, data file transfer and off-site data storage. The VMOE service allows you to choose a service tier and, if necessary, increase it on the fly should business increase.

Speeds of up to a full gigabyte are available with VMOE service.

AT A GLANCE

CLIENT: White House Custom Color, South St. Paul, Minn.

BUSINESS: A digital photography laboratory with 125 employees.

CHALLENGE: A new office and a robust growth rate bring a constant need for more bandwidth. Clients send very large files.

SOLUTION: VISI first installed four T1 lines before moving White House to VMOE technology.

RESULTS: White House likes the ability to add bandwidth as it grows and VMOE has been less expensive than T1 lines.



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