



## CASE STUDY

BUSINESS-CLASS WEB HOSTING / COLOCATION / CONNECTIVITY / CONSULTING

### VISI'S WEB HOSTING AND SERVER MANAGEMENT SUPPORTS ROCKLER THROUGH GROWTH SPURTS

#### THE COMPANY

Rockler Companies, Inc. in Medina, MN owns several businesses selling anything and everything associated with hardware. Among them is Rockler Woodworking and Hardware, one of the nation's leading hardware catalog suppliers. The company's Web sites – Women In Woodworking, [woodworking.com](http://woodworking.com), [freeplans.com](http://freeplans.com), and [routermania.com](http://routermania.com) – have created online communities where woodworking pros and newbies can learn more about building their own projects and buying merchandise.

The company owns Woodworking Journal, a respected publication which also maintains an online site and an e-zine. Finally, Rockler also owns a chain of 35 retail stores across the country. The company employs more than 500 people.

#### THE CHALLENGE

VISI's challenge in working with Rockler was maintaining exceptional service provided by Digital North for the company's online component since 1997. Digital North hosted the company's four Web sites and handled Internet connectivity. In 2005, Digital North purchased VISI from a New Haven, Conn. Internet Service Provider and decided to maintain the VISI brand. The two companies, fortunately, had a close relationship prior to the merger.

## THE SOLUTION

VISI's new relationship with Rockler has only strengthened, says Scott Ekman, Rockler's vice president of marketing. Since the merger, Rockler has doubled the number of servers due to increased traffic. VISI now hosts three Web servers and one database server for Rockler's Web sites and online catalog.

VISI suggested two improvements to the technology arsenal that have increased the performance of Rockler's online sites and store. The addition of a Network Attached Storage (NAS) unit provides centralized database access to users of the company's network. The NAS "has improved our network's performance resulting in faster customer experiences online. They can access content on our Web sites in milliseconds," says Ekman. "We've been very happy with the speeds on our sites. They're the fastest they have ever been."

At one point the sites fell off slightly in performance, recording a 1/2000 second lag time, a gap unnoticeable to the average Web site visitor. Still, VISI reported the problem to Rockler and fixed it quickly through a tweak to the sites' domain name system, or DNS. "It came back to the same speed it was at," he says.

Another technology VISI added to the Rockler account was the Coyote Point E250si for load balancing of the traffic. The Coyote Point manages traffic by disbursing it equally among servers so they operate more efficiently while offering redundancy. On average, it allows existing servers to absorb 25 percent more traffic.

## THE RESULTS

Ekman says the addition has helped Rockler deal with increased traffic on the network without purchasing any additional servers. "The NAS and Coyote Point hardware really improved the performance of our online sites without a great deal of extra expense," he says.

The merger has had no visible effect on Rockler. If anything, VISI's service may have gotten better. "If there's a problem we hear about it in 15 minutes," he says. "If you have detected something they typically are already aware of it."

Pre-emptive maintenance is a key to a well-functioning Web operation. Ekman offers a "great" example in this regard. A VISI technician came by to replace a poorly operating fan on one of the company's servers. After noticing one of the other servers was the same age as the faulty one, he called Ekman and suggested a second fan replacement.

"He didn't have to do that but it showed me they're looking out for our interests and I really appreciate that kind of foresight, even if it meant he had to come in at 3 a.m. to do the replacement," he says. "The fan that could have failed, and that he worked on, was our database server. It would have been awful if that had crashed. That's the kind of service that leads me to say I would highly recommend VISI to other companies."

## AT A GLANCE

**CLIENT:** Rockler Companies, Inc.  
([www.rockler.com](http://www.rockler.com))

**BUSINESS:** A woodworking catalog, online and publishing company with more than 500 employees.

**CHALLENGE:** Finding a cost-efficient solution to manage a growing clientele and, for VISI, maintaining a good relationship with Digital North clients.

**SOLUTION:** Four servers for Web hosting, a NAS for storage and Coyote Point E250si for load balancing.

**RESULTS:** No need yet for new servers to manage incoming traffic. VISI maintained Digital North's outstanding service.



12 South Sixth Street, Suite 630, Minneapolis, MN 55402

**MAIN** 612.395.9000 **SALES** 612.395.9090 **FAX** 612.288.0889

**EMAIL** [sales@visi.com](mailto:sales@visi.com) **WEB** [www.visi.com](http://www.visi.com)