

By Derek Simon

Anyone who has spent much time around computers knows the sinking feeling of a system meltdown or a power failure. For PC users, it usually happens on the eve of final exams or some other critical event. For IT executives, disaster invariably strikes on the verge of the company's quarterly close, or in the middle of preparing a crucial company presentation.

Inside FORTRUST™

Anatomy of a growing datacenter



For individuals, such occasions typically results in tantrums with more than a few salty expletives. For businesses, however, the effects can be considerably more devastating. Downed computers mean lost time, lost opportunities and lost revenue.

Enter FORTRUST, a high-availability datacenter in Denver with 48,000 square feet of raised-floor colocation capacity – 14,000 of which were added in a \$30 million expansion project completed earlier this year. In addition to space, FORTRUST offers an array of managed services, including data backup and storage, as well as security.

Despite a weak economy, comScore Inc. reports that Internet sales topped \$846 million on Cyber Monday (the ceremonial kick-off of the holiday online shopping season). That's up 15 percent from 2007. It's little wonder, then, that more and more companies are discovering the need for better, safer data and systems operations. Nor is it surprising that FORTRUST's business has been booming. This year alone, the data center has experienced 115 percent revenue growth and an 83 percent increase in clients.

"In 2006, we started getting more aggressive with our marketing and sales strategy,"

explains FORTRUST General Manager Rob McClary. "2007 was a real good year for us – and 2008 was good. I think part of that is because we've become more aggressive and strategic in our sales and marketing approach. But I also think it's a sign that the industry, and the need and demand for high-quality colocation facilities and managed services, has grown in the last few years."

Although FORTRUST draws most of its customers from the Rocky Mountain region, the company has its share of out-of-state and even out-of-country clients.

"We have a variety of customers," says McClary. "I would say the majority of them are regional, maybe – and I'm guessing here – 60 percent. The other 40 percent would be made up of customers that are around the nation, from as far away as Florida and California and even some customers outside of the continental United States."

McClary credits the company's growth to a strong infrastructure. But he also believes being based in Denver has helped.

"When you're talking about colocation, it really starts with the facility and the infrastructure," he says. "When customers are looking for that high-availability

infrastructure to support their servers, keep the power going to the servers, keep the cooling – all the environmental – the physical security around that plays a big part.

"But, along with that, is the geographical location of the facility," McClary points out. "Denver sets up great for colocation. Denver represents a technology hub; there's a core work force here with expertise in technology, so I think that's one of the advantages that Denver brings. Geographically also, it's in a low-risk area of geographical issues. Every area in the United States presents some form of geographical risk. The ones here in Denver can be risk-mitigated – such things as flooding, lightning, and snowfall – without going to extraordinary efforts to mitigate against those types of risks."

Access to fiber and the power grid that surrounds the Mile High City is another plus, McClary says.

"In the last seven years or so, we've had those instances where we've actually had to run our generators," he notes, "but, truthfully, they've been very limited. You spend a lot of money for uninterruptible power supply (UPS) system generators, but we've really had to use those things quite infrequently, so the grid that we're

located on is fairly stable with respect to a lot of other places you could be.

"Our customers haven't seen a power interruption since we opened for operations in 2001," McClary adds.

Making sure that the company's perfect power record stays intact is Bryon Miller, FORTRUST's DC Operations Manager. Like his boss, Miller believes that FORTRUST's consistency of operations and strategic planning have been paramount to the center's success.

"We track all of our maintenance and our history for our equipment through software, so we can tell when maintenance is performed, what maintenance has been performed and the result of that maintenance," Miller explains. "We do a lot of maintenance in-house, but for areas that require greater expertise, we use OEMs (original equipment manufacturer) – the manufacturer's reps – to come in and do that maintenance. In addition to that, the procedures that we have around the maintenance are strictly followed, so that the [work] is accomplished and performed the same way each time.

"We don't skimp on the quality of the equipment we purchase either," adds Miller. "We don't hop from manufacturer to manufacturer based on price. When we find something that works, we stick with it. That way, our people become familiar with the equipment and it's easier to identify problems that occur, or might occur, because of the familiarity they have with the equipment. All of that figures into having the equipment up and available when we need it to be, which is all the time."

Miller explains that FORTRUST operates in an "N+1" electrical environment with multiple power modes, meaning that the plant can still operate should one of its components or a power source fail.

"The N+1 provides the kind of environment where we can take a piece of equipment down



Photos by Susan English



The team at FORTRUST: 'Vested in the success of our customers'



and not affect our customers' environment," Miller notes. "We have that N+1 in just about every instance ... but it goes beyond that. For our electrical systems, for example, not only do we have a backup generator in case one goes down, but we use redundant sourcing to feed the power that goes to the individual customer's equipment. ... The advantage of that is, where other companies may have to go into a maintenance window and notify their customers whenever maintenance is performed, we just transfer loads and do the maintenance on the equipment during the normal business day."

The human element has also factored strongly in FORTRUST's emergence as one of the country's leading data centers.

"We've got a group of people here that really have an ownership for the facility itself and treat it like it's their own, which is very apparent to our customers," says McClary. "They not only have a level of ownership for the facility, which is part of the product and service that we offer, but they are also vested in our customers' success and what our customers think of the facility, so there's a big pride factor there."

Still, McClary readily admits that FORTRUST's services are not for everyone.

"One of the key things that we often tell customers is it really becomes a question of what your business plan is when it involves availability," he says. "If you have a rack full of servers and they need to be up and connected, or interconnected, to the Internet, for example, the infrastructure that we can provide handles that for you. Some businesses may not need high availability. They can afford for their servers to be down for a period of time – for each business it's different."

"With that said, it's also a matter of space constraints," McClary adds. "If you have a lot of servers in a rack – that's quite a bit of power that they draw and quite a bit of heat that they subsequently put off. Lots of office spaces really aren't built to handle those types of electrical and subsequent heat loads. So, those are a couple of the things that I think you need to consider when you start to talk about or look at colocation services. The other thing is: a lot of businesses, once they come to a certain point where they want their IT resources to focus on what makes the business money, they don't want to have to deal with the day-to-day IT thing that you need to do – and that's where managed services come in." ■

Reprinted with Permission of Rocky Mountain TechLine

Regional Datacenters

SunGard Availability

www.availability.sungard.com
550 E. 84th Ave, Suite E-5
Thornton CO 80229
303-942-2800

RiptideHosting, Inc.

www.riptidehosting.com
4973 S. Owens St.
Englewood CO 80127
888-282-1883

Absolute Performance, Inc.

(FORTRUST Data Center Partner)
www.absolute-performance.com
2100 Central Ave. #102
Boulder CO 80301
720-250-6654

Comfluent

www.comfluent.net
910 15th Street, Suite 751
Denver CO 80202
303-376-1600

Managed Data Holdings

(Previously Data393)
www.manageddataholdings.com
393 Inverness Parkway
Englewood, CO
303-268-1483

Earthnet, Data Center Consulting Services

www.earthnet.net
4735 Walnut St., Suite F
Boulder, CO
303-546-6362

First Link Technology, Inc.

www.firstlink.com
4260 E. Evans Ave.
Denver
303-691-8200

foreThought.net

www.forethought.net
910 16th St #1220
Denver
303-228-0070

Fortrust, LLC

www.FortrustDataCenter.com
4300 Brighton Blvd
Denver
720-264-2041

Level 3 Communications, Inc.

1025 Eldorado Blvd.
Broomfield, CO 80021
720-888-1000

Qwest Communications

Qwest.com
No information yet
1801 California
Denver
800RideQwest

Qwest Communications

www.qwest.com
675 W. Peachtree St
Atlanta GA
770-777-7243

Red Rocks Data Center

www.redrockdatacenter.com
P.O. Box 803
Morrison, CO 80465
303-558-2155

RockyNet

www.rockynet.com
No information yet
1050 17th Street
Denver
303-748-7831

ViaWest, Inc.

Denver
www.viawest.net
1444 Wazee St. Suite 215
Denver
720-891-1022

VLEC Communications Inc.

www.vlecom.com
Sent email to the PR department
No information yet.
910 15th Street Suite 857
Denver
(303) 530-0206

CHOOSING A DATA CENTER IS NEVER EASY

THE WRONG CHOICE CAN MEAN

- Outages and downtime
- Escalating costs
- Power and cooling constraints
- Inconsequential service delivery

FORTRUST IS THE RIGHT CHOICE



- ✓ RELIABILITY AND UPTIME
- ✓ EXPANDABILITY FOR GROWTH
- ✓ PREDICTABLE COSTS
- ✓ URGENT SERVICE DELIVERY

Tour our world-class data center at
www.FortrustDataCenter.com/rmtl

866-376-9373



COLOCATION

MANAGED SERVICES

DISASTER RECOVERY