

Parallels® Business Automation Standard

Service Provider Case Study

SoftLayer® enables automated operations for hosting companies via seamless integration of Parallels software

Business Summary

Based in Dallas, TX and founded in 2005, SoftLayer is one of the largest infrastructure services companies catering to the cloud and dedicated hosting industry. Their target customers are shared hosting providers, virtual private server providers, web designers, web developers, IT professionals and small businesses.

Business Situation

In a complex and price sensitive industry such as datacenter services, it's critical to drive down costs aggressively. That's why SoftLayer opted, as a founding principle, to be built from the ground up with automation of systems and services as a means of reducing support costs.

SoftLayer customers are hosters who leverage the SoftLayer infrastructure to in turn offer services to small business customers. Those hosters face the same cost pressures as SoftLayer. "Our customers need automation to help manage their business and IT environments," said James McDowell, Marketing Manager, SoftLayer.

An example of just such a SoftLayer hoster customer is ZipServers, who offers small businesses shared web hosting plans and virtual private servers, and Parallels tools such as Parallels Plesk Panel. The challenge for ZipServers is to be cost-effective it needs to order new servers from SoftLayer only when those previously ordered have been used. That means ZipServers' success requires the ability to order a new server and have it immediately available for deployment to customers from the pool of servers in their Parallels Business Automation Standard implementation.

"Automation was a big problem," said Charles Nix, Director of Marketing at ZipServers. They needed to easily scale their business in an automated way to reduce costs and improve customer service with rapid response times.

Solution

SoftLayer partnered with Parallels because of its equally strong commitment to full-service automation software. By leveraging APIs for the Parallels license key system and using deployment software of their own design, SoftLayer has automated server creation for ZipServers – reducing to mere minutes what might otherwise take one to two days.

SOFTLAYER

Business Situation

SoftLayer offers on-demand data center and dedicated server hosting services to customers like ZipServers, who offer VPS, shared hosting, and bare metal solutions. For both ZipServers and SoftLayer, the process of deploying servers needed to be automated to save time, improve customer service and, ultimately, reduce costs.

Solution

SoftLayer instantly deploys servers along with Parallels Virtuozzo Containers and Parallels Plesk Panel to its hosting customers. Integrating Parallels products such as Parallels Business Automation Standard enables SoftLayer's hoster customer ZipServers to decrease time spent on manual administration of new servers and helps ZipServers provide better customer service while reducing the volume of calls to customer support.

"Parallels is a key component to our success and with SoftLayer also supporting Parallels products, it's a win-win situation."

— Charles Nix,
Director of Marketing,
ZipServers

Parallels software enables SoftLayer customers such as ZipServers a self-service experience and creates the possibility of building entire businesses on top of it. "Parallels provides software that supports our objective of providing our customers the tools they need to automate their businesses," said SoftLayer's McDowell. SoftLayer leverages automated license key allocation and imaging onto servers of Parallels software such as Parallels Virtuozzo Containers and Parallels Plesk Panel. As a result, ZipServers is now able to instantly deploy SoftLayer servers and Parallels software that ZipServers' small business customers can then order through the Parallels Business Automation Standard billing system.

"For a small company like ZipServers, it is difficult to create attractive offerings that are easy to market," said ZipServers' Nix. "We had to automate so we chose Parallels." The Parallels key automation system and SoftLayer's deployment software enables SoftLayer, in turn, to provide ZipServers with automated real time server deployment that saves time and delivers better service to ZipServers' customers.

"We currently utilize SoftLayer's hardware and network infrastructure as the backbone of our offerings," said ZipServers' Nix. "They provide the base for our systems. We in turn provide managed services, VPS, and shared products SoftLayer does not offer. In addition, we have given our clients the ability to use the SoftLayer private network to manage their VPS, bare metal, or shared hosting platforms."

Benefits

Parallels and SoftLayer give ZipServers a full-featured suite of products that can be quickly provisioned and easily managed, saving time and money. This enables them to provide offerings combined with a level of service that keeps them competitive in the web hosting industry.

"Using Parallels Business Automation Standard, Parallels Virtuozzo Containers, and Parallels Plesk Panel products allows us to setup and deploy customer hosting accounts almost instantly, which allows them to better run their businesses and help their clients," said ZipServers' Nix.

"We expect that we will be able to provide the infrastructure to more and more customers that rely on Parallels Business Automation Standard and Parallels Virtuozzo Containers tools as well as Parallels Plesk Panel," said SoftLayer's McDowell. "As a company committed to automating everything we do, Parallels is a perfect fit for SoftLayer and its customers."

Benefits

- Saved time by automating the provisioning of servers. Now takes minutes to do what would otherwise take 1-2 days.
- Saved money and remained competitive through offering increased services and accelerated deployment while reducing expenses.

Services Used

- Parallels Business Automation Standard
- Parallels Virtuozzo Containers
- Parallels Plesk Panel

"Parallels provides software that gives our customers the tools they need to automate their businesses."

— James McDowell,
Marketing Manager,
SoftLayer

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