

Steadfast Achieves Storage Reliability and Flexibility for Future Growth with Datera

Problems

- Limited capacity
- Not scalable
- Not flexible
- Unreliable
- Expensive

Solution

- Steadfast chose Datera due to its extensive flexibility, scale-out capabilities, reliability across a constantly evolving IT landscape and competitive price point value to customers.

Results

- Simplified storage
- Scalability
- Effective client nurturing
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Competitive customer pricing

Future

- Scale Datera globally
- Increase site-wide capacities
- Consistent high performance
- Growing customer infrastructure

It seems all the coolest tech companies start in someone’s garage or bedroom. Steadfast cloud services is one of those tech companies, complete with its own prodigy and room. In 1998, Karl Zimmerman was 14 years old when he started Steadfast as a shared hosting company from his parents’ Wisconsin home. Zimmerman and his company have evolved over the years. Today, Karl is Chairman and CEO of the Chicago-based, multi-million dollar data services business with continuous and strong, year-over-year growth and thousands of satisfied customers.

Steadfast is laser-focused on uniquely designing and delivering innovative IT infrastructure with end-to-end expertise. From cloud services and virtualization to infrastructure hosting, managed services and security, Steadfast offers peace of mind and rock-solid experience.

Zimmerman does not expect customers to be the technical experts. “We work to be that true extension and partner for our customers. Our motto is 'Strengthen your focus,' which means customers should be able to focus on what they’re good at — growing their core business. We’ll do what we’re good at — focusing on their infrastructure. We take the time to learn the customer’s business requirements and build the network, storage and virtual layers they need, and then we provide the support, monitoring, and management they want,” says Zimmerman.



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The Challenge

Steadfast operates three fully redundant data centers with two in Chicago, Illinois and one in Edison, New Jersey. A high-performance, fully redundant network enables speed and resilience for customer operations such as trading, gaming and intense transactional processes. The challenges for Steadfast have primarily been around storage.

“Networking and computing, no problem, we got it. Storage can be difficult. We need to maintain flexibility and reliability for everything we do. We need to address constantly evolving customer demands but at a price point that works for our customers. The challenge comes in being able to scale out storage and IOPS flexibly and somewhat independently and to have options to manage both,” explains Zimmerman. “We required three different kinds of storage for archival, general production and highperformance needs.”

Steadfast did not want to create storage silos, which breed poor utilization and overhead, nor did the team want to build and manage separate storage platforms. The company supports VMware, HyperV and Xen-based virtualization for their customers’ varied needs as well as some container-based environments for internal use. Zimmerman and his team evaluated a dozen potential storage solutions to meet the unique Steadfast IT ecosystem. Some vendor solutions were cost prohibitive; others were too complex or not robust enough.

“We looked at HP 3Par, Infinidad, NetApp SolidFire, Nimble and Pure Storage. None of them met all our requirements. We opted for highly scalable, flexible and cost-efficient solution from Datera,” he furthers.

“ We believe that Datera is the only storage solution we’re going to need, period. We expect to build all of our systems and products off Datera with the reliability, flexibility and price point for all our storage needs. Now, we have the confidence in our backend, so no matter what products or customer solutions we’re working on, we can build off that storage.”

Karl Zimmerman, CEO and Founder, Steadfast



The Solution

To support business agility and align performance with data value, Steadfast selected Datera with Hybrid Flash Nodes (HFN). Datera is fully automated storage that runs enterprise applications at web-scale value. Datera loads software-defined, scale-out storage on any standard x86 servers for any orchestration stack.

Intended to simplify operations, Datera decouples application storage from physical infrastructure and employs policy-driven architecture. Steadfast gains the flexibility to adapt to changes transparently.

Datera nodes facilitate the hybrid latitude Steadfast needs to design and manage a broad spectrum of customer environments. Presently, Steadfast uses Datera nodes with 96TB each across the IT infrastructure. The Datera data plane delivers unprecedented scale-out, which can be seamlessly deployed and scaled up or down to meet today's dynamic digital workloads. All system elements are continually rebalanced, and data is automatically migrated to guaranteed continuous application access with zero downtime.

"The possibilities of customer build configurations are endless. Having the hybrid setup allows us to build and scale in all the ways we need, as our customers grow and as we grow, without adding complexity or unnecessary cost structures," says Zimmerman.

"And, installation took under an hour, with less than 10 minutes for each additional node," adds Marc Schulz, Steadfast's senior systems engineer. "We had scoped out the project with another competing storage vendor initially and were looking at three months to deploy with some specs that didn't line up. With Datera, the process was exactly as we scoped it, deployment was exceptionally smooth, and we were up and running in hours not months."

The Outcome

Steadfast remains a cool tech company and superbly nurtures its growing customer base. Since deploying Datera across its storage enterprise, Steadfast has realized extensive resilience and value. Simplified storage and the ease of hybrid scale-out help Steadfast meet customer expectations and pricing across the wide range of virtualized platforms and diverse environments. Moving forward, Zimmerman anticipates the company will continue to evolve and innovate to meet the future's dynamic business climate. He expects storage will remain a challenge for organizations that operate underperforming or siloed environments. Not so for Steadfast.

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About Datera

Datera is the only 100% software-based elastic data services platform that powers high performance, data-intensive applications @scale with breakthrough orchestration and automation in partnership with the leaders in server-based infrastructure, all at a 70% lower total cost of ownership and operation.

Datera is recognized by Network World as a Hot Storage Company to Watch, CRN as a Top Software-Defined Data Center Provider and the Telecom Council as a Service Provider Innovation Award winner. To learn more about Datera, our partners, and our solutions, visit www.datera.io, email info@datera.io, or call +1-844-4DATERA.

About Steadfast

Steadfast specializes in flexible cloud environments, infrastructure hosting, and a full suite of reliable managed services and security, with fully redundant data centers in Chicago and northern New Jersey.

Founded in 1998 by 14-year old Karl Zimmerman in his bedroom in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Steadfast began as a hobby to feed Karl's passion for internet technology. While the company has evolved from a hobby to a multimillion dollar IT company that services thousands of clients, the passion for technology remains a cornerstone of Steadfast principles.

Today, Steadfast prides itself on providing customers with high quality, flexible, and exceptionally reliable managed services with unparalleled support, at a great price. Providing consultation at all phases of service planning, design, and implementation, supported by 24/7/365 on-site engineers that manage and protect that service, Steadfast has become a natural extension of our customers' IT resources.

Our slogan, "Strengthen Your Focus" summarizes those benefits. Steadfast allows our customer IT resources to focus on projects and priorities that grow their business while we focus on the day-to-day infrastructure maintenance.

