



Data Center Expansion Made Painless

A Trusted Partner Simplifies It All

This case study is brought to you by PC Connection, Inc., parent of the PC Connection family of companies, a collection of best-in-class information technology (IT) solutions providers. Its subsidiaries include PC Connection Sales Corporation, GovConnection, and MoreDirect, which service small- and medium-sized businesses, government, and enterprise markets, respectively.

» AddThis is known as one of the Web's largest infrastructure platforms, providing powerful, easy to use engagement tools and services for advertisers, publishers, and brands looking to power their media strategies with Web search, site, social, and sales data. Supporting 14 million domains, 1.3 billion unique users per month, and ten terabytes of data created per day, AddThis knew they'd have to expand their infrastructure to meet the growing needs of their customers. They turned to the experts at the PC Connection family of companies to build out a solution to scale the compute capacity of their data centers and create a more robust network.

Knowing Who to Call

AddThis is the most widely used content engagement and analytics platform on the open Web. Their tools streamline social engagement across platforms and optimize the user experience by surfacing the right tools at the right time. Solutions include sharing, following, welcome messages, and tools for recommended content that help website owners personalize and maximize content engagement.

With 140 employees spread out across the U.S. and two main data centers on each coast, AddThis runs approximately 1500 total servers. Andy Tomasello, Director of Operations for AddThis, called PC Connection right away when his team began planning the coming year's infrastructure expansion. Previously, PC Connection had helped them deploy a number of servers, and the partnership has only grown stronger from there. "PC Connection is a huge partner for us," Tomasello said. "We work with them almost daily, [and] we trust them quite a lot. So our first call was to PC Connection to ... get the ball rolling." After Tomasello outlined a specific set of needs for the infrastructure expansion, the PC Connection team went to work by first performing an in-depth assessment of the current environment. They then took the analysis from that assessment and searched the market to put together a range of products and solutions that would meet the company's needs—which were rather unusual in the midst of today's virtualized servers trend.

A Unique Environment

"We use no virtualization at all in our environment," Tomasello explained. "One of the main reasons is that our data processing engine relies on having 100% access to disks, memory, and CPU, which would really be hindered by virtualization. Ultimately, we need a lot of servers to process a lot of stuff, and we need that bare metal performance." Because of these requirements, AddThis values the high performance of physical servers over saving space and resources with virtualized servers—and they can

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afford the latency. In addition, certain power and cooling restrictions on data centers had been lifted, making this the perfect time to roll out additional workhorse servers.

As a Solutions Architect with PC Connection observed, "These guys [at AddThis] are really smart and know what they're doing. They get into the depths of utilizations of their machines—tune their software to behave to the level of their hardware. They understand their environment so well that it really helped us in determining what industry platforms would work best for them."

It's About the Teamwork

AddThis worked closely with PC Connection to bring in two demo units from different vendors for evaluation. After putting the units through their paces, recording and graphing a series of metrics, AddThis chose the HP ProLiant SL230 Gen8 server, which packs 8 servers in 4U. The density of this product made it the perfect fit for their growing infrastructure, where often hundreds of servers will tag team to complete one certain task.

After making the product choice, PC Connection and AddThis worked with HP to get the servers ready for deployment through HP's Factory Express service. "[HP] actually builds all of the servers in their factory in Houston, and then they rack, cable, label, test, and configure all the units to your specifications, which is a huge time saver," Tomasello said. "By the time they left the factory, they were ready to go and all set with our specifications."

Once the servers were delivered to each of the company's data centers, Tomasello said it was about a three-day process to get them all running at about 50% production load—the fastest turnaround Tomasello has ever seen. And because everything had been tested twice before leaving HP's factory, only three hard drives failed in each data center during rollout, which Tomasello called "a fantastic rate of failure."

One Successful Project Leads to the Next

With the new servers deployed in their data centers, Tomasello and his team have been able to work more quickly, and the increased capacity has let them add projects without issues. "We have confidence in the hardware and a surplus of systems we can hand out to teams over the rest of the year. It really eases our job because we know we have that extra room to work," Tomasello said.

This won't be the last time Tomasello calls on PC Connection for their expertise. In fact, AddThis is already planning to refresh a storage node in each data center to something more robust, and they'll have their trusted partners at PC Connection to facilitate that rollout. Also, since AddThis has leased the new servers for three years, they'll be working with PC Connection again when it's time to upgrade. "They're a vital part of our team here," Tomasello said. "They're kind of an extension of our operations team, and we couldn't get our jobs done without them."

If you're interested in a network or server upgrade, the experts at PC Connection are just a phone call away. We offer a range of assessments that will provide critical insight into your infrastructure and help you solve your toughest IT challenges.

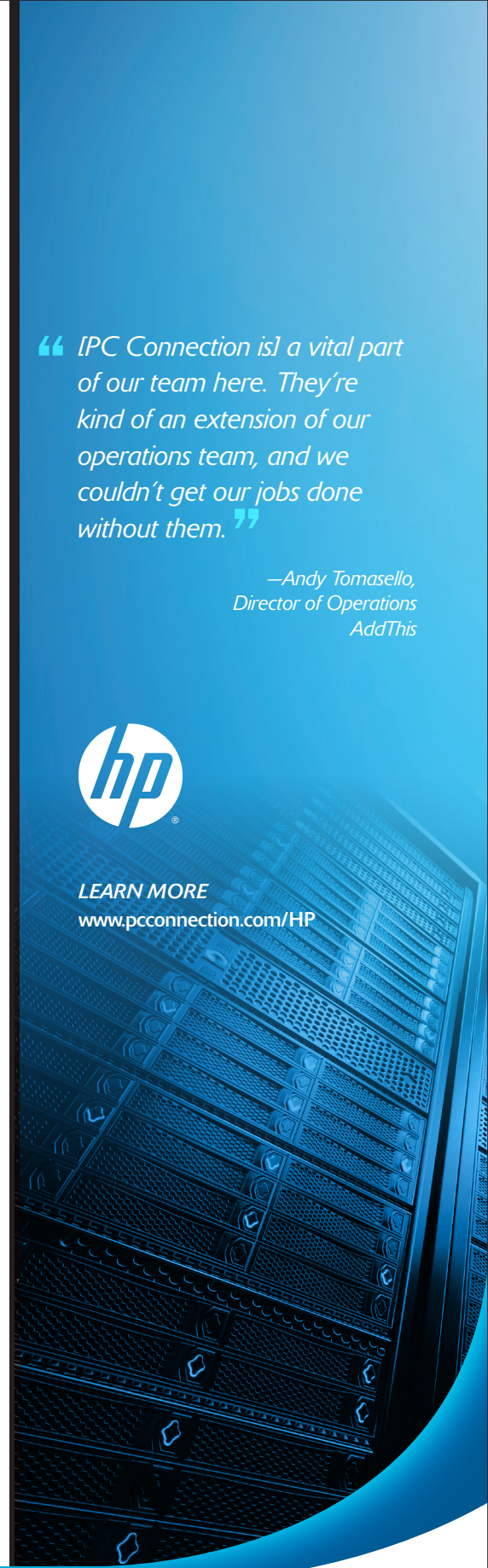
 To schedule an assessment or to learn more, call today.

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*—Andy Tomasello,
Director of Operations
AddThis*



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