



DIGEX

SUNTONE CERTIFIED SERVICES SUCCESS STORY

HIGHLIGHTS

Company

Digex, Inc.

Industry/Market

Internet Service Provider

Key Business Issues

- Provide a rock-solid infrastructure for delivering application services
- Shorten sales cycles while securing a competitive advantage over other service providers
- Be certain of becoming one of the handful of companies who will provide the world's future computing and networking infrastructure

Business Results

- Standardization on Sun for UNIX® results in consistently high availability and scalability
- Satisfied customers' expectations for SunToneSM certification result in substantial revenue growth
- Secured, competitive advantage instills confidence in long-range future success

“Digex pushes the limits of the Internet every day. Our customers demand innovative products with rock-solid reliability and that’s what we deliver with our SunToneSM Certified hosting platform. SunTone certification is Sun’s seal of approval that you have arrived as a service provider and you can deliver on the promise of Internet services as reliable as dial tone.”

Charles Boyle, co-founder and Director of Research and Development, Digex, Inc.

Digex was a pioneer in the field of complex Internet application and Web hosting services and remains a leader today. Companies that develop and provide Web-based applications turn to Digex to host them with confidence that Digex has mastered the many aspects entailed in running a fully managed Internet service. This confidence is instilled not only by Digex’s six-year record of success, but also by the SunToneSM Certified status that Digex was the very first in the industry to achieve.

Sun Microsystems, Inc. is Digex’s exclusive UNIX® platform partner. The two firms have enjoyed a close and multi-faceted relationship for many years, as exemplified by Digex’s SunTone leadership. A member of the SunTone Architecture Council and steering committee from the outset, Digex fought hard to keep the bar set high on SunTone certification. Because this standard remains rigorous, Digex is finding that customers trust SunTone certification. Now many customers expect their service provider to be SunTone Certified, providing a distinct competitive edge to those who are.

Providing Internet Hosting Services Since 1993

Digex was one of the first companies in the world to sense the potential of the Web for delivering applications to customers. As early as 1993, the company began offering Internet Service Provider services, which grew to become a mainstay of the business by 1995. As the Internet matured, so did Digex’s services. Now the company offers a complete infrastructure management service for companies who develop applications that are architected for delivery using the Application Service Provider (ASP) model. ASPs count on Digex to provide a rock-solid infrastructure for their services,



freeing them to concentrate on their forte—business and application development. Dot-com companies look to Digex and its work force of over 1,000 people for every aspect of managing, maintaining, supporting and growing their computing and networking environment.

“Customers need a way of knowing that their service will be there for them. It’s not enough for them to tour facilities, meet people, and hear about provisions for this and that, because all it takes is one failing—perhaps in an aspect of service provisioning that the customer hadn’t even thought about—for their mission-critical applications to suddenly become unavailable one day. Customers need a clear indication that a service provider ‘has arrived’ in every sense, and that’s what SunTone certification is all about.”

Charles Boyle, co-founder and Director of Research and Development, Digex, Inc.

Digex’s alliance with Sun Microsystems, Inc. has been strong ever since the firm standardized on Sun Enterprise™ servers when the service was in the formative stage. Today, over 1000 Sun Enterprise servers, including several Sun Enterprise 10000 servers, populate Digex’s data centers. Sun servers and storage have consistently delivered the high availability, performance and scalability that are demanded more than ever now that customers are entrusting their mission-critical applications to service providers.

Digex understands, however, that providing a reliable service requires much more than reliable platforms—it requires excellence in infrastructure management, support, maintenance, security, and operational processes of many kinds. To distinguish service providers who possess this broad-based excellence from those who do not, Digex saw the need for an objective standard to signify distinction.

Digex was closely involved with Sun in the initial conception of SunTone certification, and served as a member of the SunTone Architecture Council and steering committee from the outset. “We fought hard to make sure that SunTone would be an exacting standard that covers not only the details of infrastructure deployment, but also the overall availability and quality of service for the entire user experience,” reported Boyle. “We’re pleased with the specification that emanated, especially the inclusion of mandatory requirements. It’s not enough to be great at almost everything. You have to be great in every single important aspect of running your service.”

First Ever to Become SunTone Certified

Shortly after Level I SunTone certification standards were published, Digex undertook the certification process for the full gamut of its services. The substantial work entailed in the effort was rewarded when Digex became the first service provider to be SunTone Certified in the fall of 1999. “We took on the highest level in phase 1, which is secure hosting,” said Boyle. “We knew it would be a lot of work and indeed it was, but that’s the way we wanted it to be—a tough standard that only the best can meet. I can’t say that we had to make any fundamental changes in order to become certified because everything we needed to do was already present or at least underway at the time, but there were several aspects of the service that we institutionalized as part of the process. We filed a 500-page report at the end, which was so thorough that it became a reference for others to follow.”

“The experience was more than worthwhile,” Boyle added, “because of the impact that Digex’s SunTone Certified status is having on customers. It shortens the sales cycle for us, since customers no longer have the need to ask a million questions,” he explained. “SunTone certification eases the customer’s mind, since it says that Sun is standing behind us and vouching for us. Nowadays, we’re finding that customers expect their service provider to be SunTone Certified, and a company that isn’t certified is at a competitive disadvantage.”

Keeping the Bar Set High for Level II Specifications

Digex continues to work hard in its SunTone Architecture Council role, and is now helping to create Level II specifications. "Again, we're being stalwarts about the need to keep the bar set high," said Boyle. "We want to see a spec that guarantees specific, quantified levels of high availability. Sun is a great company to work with," Boyle added. "They understand what service providers are trying to do, and what it takes for them to succeed. We're pleased to see the inclusion of co-marketing provisions, financing options, and technical and professional services in the SunTone Certification and Branding Program. Features like these make it easier for ASPs and others who partner with us to achieve SunTone certification themselves. With that under their belt and Sun as their basis, it's just that much easier for customers to choose us to provide their services."

Digex subscribes to Sun's view of the future where a handful of service providers will provide the world's computing and networking infrastructure, and application developers and users will all focus on their areas of core competence and trust these few specialists to provide the foundation.

"SunTone certification is accelerating this trend," concluded Boyle. "It shortens the decision-making process for customers, and helps weed out the service providers who can't pass muster. In these days of uncertainty about many segments of the electronic commerce boom where it's sometimes hard to tell a fad from a solid future, there's no question about our industry. Digex is going to be among the select few service providers who host the world's computing infrastructure in a few years, and our SunTone certification is one of the important reasons for our confidence."

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