Q9
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Colocating Critical Online Gaming Infrastructure at Q9 Ensures G4BOX Can Always Deliver an Exceptional Player Experience.

"I've been in numerous data centres, and what's impressive about Q9 is not only the layout of their physical environment and their strong site security, but also their remote 'hands & eyes' service, which is very helpful when we need someone to fix a problem quickly." - CEO, G4BOX Inc.

G4BOX

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	RESULTS
To ensure that more than 10 million registered players enjoy the best possible online gaming experience, game publisher G4BOX needed a more stable and reliable infrastructure and a more advanced Internet connectivity solution than its current data centre services provider was able to deliver.	After exploring several potential providers, G4BOX entered into a colocation contract with Q9 to host the firm's mission-critical gaming infrastructure and take advantage of Q9's high-capacity Internet connectivity to a large number of regional, national and international ISPs.	New levels of system stability and reliability ensure that G4BOX's 10 million registered players always enjoy a reliable rich and responsive gaming experience. With quick and easy access to virtually unlimited network bandwidth capacity, G4BOX also has plenty of room for growth.

A Premier Gaming Market Content Provider

Toronto-based G4BOX Inc. is a digital media provider, specializing in the publishing and distribution of online video games. The company, founded in 2005, offers online game properties in several popular game categories, primarily the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) market. G4BOX licenses games from developers around the world and publishes them for players in specific territories, mainly the U.S. and U.K. The company's business model is based on allowing gamers to register and play for free, while generating revenue from the sale of game accessories that players buy online, such as weapons and character-related items.

Player Retention is Everything

The IT infrastructure supporting G4BOX's games consists of four primary components: 1) game servers, that gamers access to play the games; 2) Web servers, for activities such as registering and buying game accessories (e.g., a "mall" Web site); 3) a database server, which stores all of a gamer's information, including what level they are at, the attributes of the character they are playing, the weapons or other game accessories they have purchased and so on; and 4) a security server to prevent hacking.

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The company depends heavily on this infrastructure to meet the demanding functional and performance requirements of these games, and to provide gamers with the kind of experience that makes them come back time and time again.

Accessibility, for example, is of critical importance. Reliable Internet connectivity and ample network bandwidth need to be available to support the hundreds of thousands of players that could be playing the games simultaneously. Response time and latency are also critical. Players accessing the games from anywhere across several continents all want quick response time – they want to be able to make decisions and make their moves quickly in order to succeed in the game and compete effectively against the game and other players.

"At the end of the day, retention is everything," says Jason Yang, CEO at G4BOX. "If a gamer can't login or shop the mall because a server or network connection is down, revenue is directly impacted; or if game response time is poor, gamers will simply go to one of 1,500 other online game sites."

Q9 Won on 'Best Value Overall'

Recognizing that system and networking uptime and performance would always be paramount, Yang and his team decided right from the start that they would outsource their data centre requirements to a third-party provider.

"The data centre services provider we used for the first couple of years was not able to deliver the system stability and reliability we needed," states Yang, adding that, "They also couldn't properly accommodate the increasing number of servers we needed to support our growth."

After reviewing potential new data centre partners, including presentations, customer reference checks and site visits, G4BOX chose to colocate its critical computing infrastructure at one of Q9's Toronto-area facilities.

Explaining their decision, Yang says, "Price was a key consideration in our choice and although Q9 was not the lowest price, the nature of their offering and the quality of their physical data centre environment clearly made them the best value."

He goes on to say that they wanted a partner with facilities in the Greater Toronto Area so that his technical staff would have quick access to their central database server and other hardware in the event of any problems.

"We also chose Q9 because we were impressed with their strong brand, solid track record and the depth of their experience supporting mission-critical infrastructure for numerous recognizable customers," adds Yang.

Knowledgeable Technical Assistance

Under the contract, G4BOX monitors and manages its own software and hardware at the Q9 location, including its central database, registration and mall Web servers, security servers and local game servers, as well as critical firewall and network switching equipment. Q9 provides space, cabinets, power, cooling and physical site security. Q9 also provisions, monitors and manages G4BOX's high-bandwidth Internet connectivity, which averages 400 Mbps and peaks as high as 800 Mbps.

"Q9 customized the enclosure design for us and configured fully redundant power with automatic failover to support a 100 per cent power availability SLA," says Yang, adding that Q9's technical people also helped them solve bandwidth utilization problems they had previously been having with the anti-hacking servers associated with each game.

The company has additional game servers colocated in data centre facilities in Miami, Los Angeles and London, England to ensure fast response time and a high-quality experience for gamers logging in from across G4BOX's primary geographies. These local game servers cache player profile information during the game, uploading it to the central database roughly every 30 minutes.

"Because we use multiple game servers, they can back each other up in the event of a server failure; but there is only one database server, so it's critical for it to be stable and that'swhy we located it at Q9," explains Yang.

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Delivering the Best Gaming Experience

G4BOX has been a Q9 customer for a number of years, and according to Yang, they are very happy with Q9's service and see the reliability there as the best out of all the U.S. and U.K. data centres at which their other game servers are hosted.

"While others claim nearly 100 per cent uptime, Q9 has actually been delivering it," says Yang. "One of the most impressive things I've seen though is their 24x7 'hands & eyes' service – whenever a server has been down, for example, and we've called them to help us so we wouldn't have to go to the data centre, they usually have it back up in only five or ten minutes."

Most important of all for G4BOX, however, is that by having critical gaming infrastructure located at Q9, the company's more than 10 million registered players always enjoy a reliable, rich and responsive gaming experience.
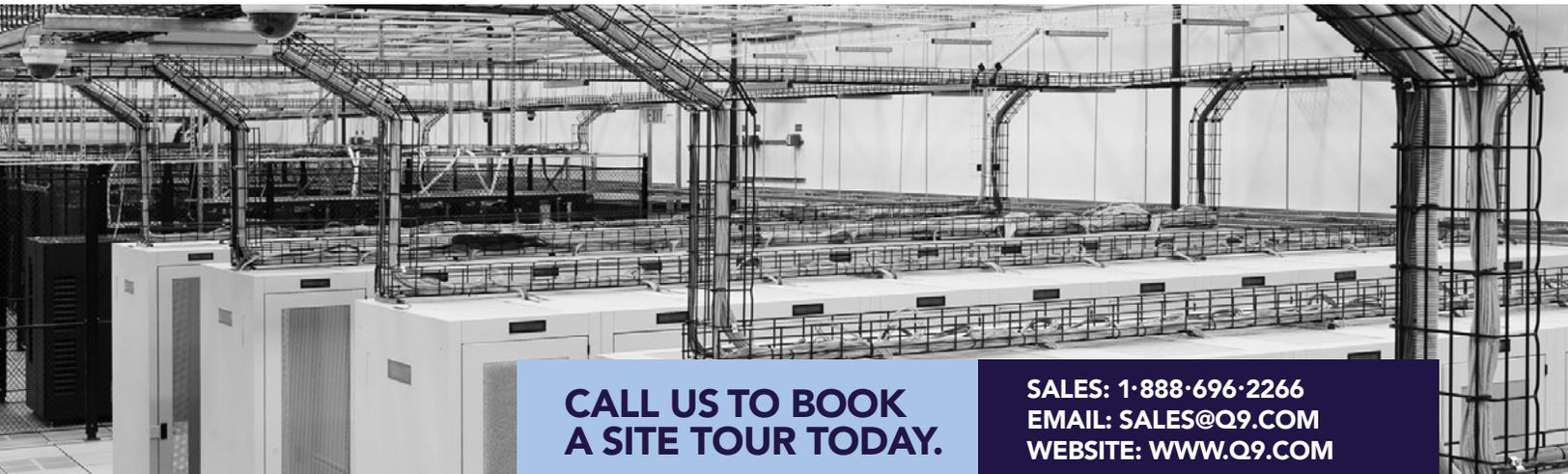
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