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Industry Eye : Case Study - Monitoring Service Keeps DollarDays International Running 24/7

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By Joe Keenan

Problem: DollarDays International, a B-to-B online wholesale distributor and closeout company for small businesses, sought a monitoring service to ensure its web store was functioning 24/7.

Solution: Hired a website monitoring service to test its site.

Results: Averaging 1,000 new visitors to its website each day, DollarDays estimates it saves thousands in potentially lost revenue by being "open" 24/7.

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Not wanting to risk losing thousands in lost sales from prospective customers because of a technical issue with its e-commerce website, DollarDays Inter-national searched for an insurance policy.

The B-to-B wholesale distributor got burned with several website outages in 2002 and 2003, of which the company couldn't determine the root cause. So it ultimately sought the services of Dotcom-Monitor, a website monitoring firm. For the past several years, DollarDay's website has been monitored and testedfrom around the globe every five minutes to make sure it's operating effectively.

Everything from the load time of product pages to the checkout process and other details is checked by Dotcom-Monitor's agents. And despite very few problems being detected with DollarDays' site — in fact, just two failures in the past four years-plus — it's the protection the service offers that makes it valuable.

"We need to be open 24 hours a day," says Marc Joseph, CEO of Scottsdale, Ariz.-based DollarDays International, on his company's sole selling channel. "If we go down for two, three, four, five seconds, that has an impact on any one of our customers."

Ounce of Prevention

With more than 1.5 million registered customers, and another 1,000 registering at the site each day, DollarDays relies on its website to sell products. The frequency with which its site is tested — every five minutes — sets it apart from its peers.

"What's unique about DollarDays is the level of monitoring frequencythat it put into place very early," says Brad Canham, vice president of business development at Dotcom-Monitor. DollarDays executives "recognized the value of it related to the fact that they're purely online. They're a little ahead of the curve compared to some of their brick-and-mortar competition, who are more looking at 15-minute or 10-minute monitoring."

With its own IT team in place to handle errors in-house, DollarDays uses Dotcom-Monitor's external agents to alert it when issues arise. Dotcom-Monitor alerted the DollarDays IT staff when there was a problem with the company's servers in New Jersey not long ago, for example. After immediately contacting the people in charge of the servers, DollarDays got the problem resolved within minutes instead of taking hours to figure it out on its own.

Fragile Environment

"The internet is so fragile," Joseph notes. "It can go down if the electricity in our area goes out, if there's a major storm that pulls everything off. Our servers are in New Jersey, and we're here in Arizona. So if they have a storm in New Jersey, we can go down. With the internet, there are all kinds of places around the country that can go down for us."

As it continues to grow, DollarDays plans to increase the frequency with which its website and shopping cart are tested. At every five minutes for now, the next step is to go to every minute. "If we can get an issue fixed within a minute rather than five minutes, that's a huge difference," says Joseph. "It's probably where we need to go next — to lessen the time it takes for us to find out." ROI

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