

The Truman Van Dyke Company and New Empire Entertainment Insurance, Inc. Success Story



The Truman Van Dyke Company (TVDCO) and New Empire Entertainment Insurance Services (NEEIS) are entertainment insurance agencies run by Brad Hodges and Andee Abad, entrepreneurs who pioneered the process of automating this very specialized form of insurance. In four years, they grew premium volume from \$8 million to \$117 million.

If a lead actor falls ill and delays production, or if a typhoon wipes out location shooting and equipment, entertainment insurance helps cover the shortfalls and recoup part of the lost production investment. Because delivering insurance quotes for entertainment is challenging to automate, most insurance providers do it manually, often taking five days or more. TVDCO/NEEIS are solving this challenge through a solution that delivers same-day quotes, giving them a significant advantage over their competition. They use Joyent's cloud to run all of the web-facing infrastructure.

The Challenge

TVDCO sells insurance directly to production companies, producers, and entertainers, while NEEIS is an entertainment wholesaler, dealing only with entertainment insurance agents. Founders Brad Hodges and Andee Abad knew that purchasing and running the company's web infrastructure for their rapidly growing business was impractical from a cost and manpower perspective. They knew that to be successful, they needed to focus on building their back office automation.

It was not a question of whether or not to use cloud computing to meet their goals, but which cloud it should be. The criteria for selecting a cloud vendor was simple: Make very few compromises and have minimal issues.

With an ambitious vision and limited capital, TVDCO/NEEIS faced a number of challenges, including:



Time to Market. CIO Brad Hodges' revolutionary idea for automating the entertainment insurance industry depended in part on bringing that idea to market before the competition. As a result, the companies needed a cloud infrastructure overnight with no large capital expenditure.



Security. On the wholesale side of its business, the back-office automation application was available to 300+ brokers through the cloud hosted website. That application was, as the CIO described it, "the key to the magic castle." Therefore, the number one concern in deploying in the cloud was security.



Scalability. Although the initial online business was going extremely well, the founders had even broader goals for their technology. The automation TVDCO/NEEIS accomplished was not limited to entertainment insurance. There were many other specialized insurance verticals that could leverage what they'd built. They needed complete flexibility to scale to an even larger number of brokers in the future.

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As a small business, and given their limited resources yet big aspirations, Brad and Andee knew it was essential to select a cloud vendor that would be a reliable partner. As a result, they chose Joyent as their cloud provider.

"Going to the cloud, I wanted to make very few compromises and have minimal issues. I also needed a secure and robust platform that could scale on demand. I particularly liked that Joyent runs SmartOS, giving me confidence that security would be rock solid."

Brad Hodges
Chief Information Officer



CUSTOMER PROFILE

Company: The Truman Van Dyke Company and New Empire Entertainment Insurance Services, Inc.

Segment: Entertainment, Insurance

Locations: U.S.

The Solution

As CIO Brad Hodges researched potential cloud providers, his short list of concerns and challenges helped narrow the field. Ultimately he decided on Joyent when fully weighing how various vendors handled security, time to market, and scalability. Joyent's solution now provides TVDCO/NEEIS with the following benefits.



Security. The Joyent SmartOS is built from the ground up to meet stringent federal and telecom security requirements. Since Joyent is built on these specifications using the Solaris kernel, TVDCO/NEEIS felt confident that their proprietary back-office processes would be secure.



Solid Ruby-on-Rails Development Platform. The TVDCO/NEEIS development team felt Joyent gave them just the right amount of control to develop their Ruby-on-Rails applications, minimizing development time but maximizing security. This kind of responsiveness helped to speed up development efforts.



Scalability. With Joyent, NEEIS can scale its application simply by increasing the number of SmartMachines through its My.Joyent portal. The company now has the potential of deploying its insurance automation processes into larger insurance specializations without worrying about scalability or availability of resources.



Support. TVDCO/NEEIS has found that the Joyent support organization puts the customer first, is highly responsive, and executes rapidly. "We needed some extra machine memory to get a job done," said Hodges. "I contacted support for more resources, thinking this isn't going to be easy. Within an hour I had the extra space I needed and the support person wanted to know if one week was enough time. That's putting the customer first."



Speed to Deployment. The TVDCO/NEEIS team was up and running within minutes. They experienced no delays in acquiring and setting up infrastructure. The entire system was ready for development immediately. Additional resources have been just as quick to deploy.



Joyent Handles the Infrastructure. Because Joyent manages the cloud 24x7, TVDCO/NEEIS avoid the costs of managing a complex infrastructure or maintaining a large IT staff. They can focus on further application development, leaving the web-facing, infrastructure portion of the solution to Joyent.