

We get the uptime we need, as well as all the benefits of a cloud platform.

Country Meats (www.countrymeats.com) started in the late 1970s as a meat cutting operation. The family owned and operated business grew over the years to include a smoked house for producing cured hams and bacon. The game changer came in the late 1980s when Country Meats was asked to create smoked snack sticks for a fundraiser. They never looked back. 2013 marked their 35th year in the meat business. They have sold over 70 million snacks to date in 16 flavors for fundraising projects across the US.

Everleap: Thanks for talking with us Jeremy. Tell us about the history of your site and your move toward e-commerce.

Jeremy Geatches: I made our first site, an information page to show flavors, in MS Front Page in 2004. Next we needed an order form, so I reverse engineered a PHP contact form I found for free on the internet. At this point and to this day I knew nothing about html or PHP. I was a kid taking apart a toy to see how it works. Trial and error landed me with a very rudimentary online order form. We were countrymeats.tripod.com or something free like that. Not very good for marketing so Paul, my brother and one of the Country Meats owners, said we need the real CountryMeats.com. Someone else owned it and wanted a few thousand for it, so Paul negotiated it for \$500. Now I'm really in over my head because I didn't and still don't know what to do with a .com, but I dug in and contacted a man that taught me everything I knew about computers - Steve Downs. He helped me get setup with a host that let me publish from MS FrontPage and get our first email addresses.

To this point as a company we had been accepting



Size
22 employees

Customer
Over 70 million snacks sold for fundraising campaigns across the U.S.

Growth
An average of 20% growth per year over the last decade.

Business challenge
Finding a host that could provide the performance and uptime needed to best serve customers and deliver an optimal e-commerce experience.

Solution used
Single site plan

orders over the phone and fax only and making about 50-70 cases in sales a day in the busiest time. Everything was written on a paper, college ruled notebook. We had dial up internet and only personal email from AOL that no one really used. My mom Jean, an owner as well, was a master sales woman but with next to no knowledge of a computer. I set up a computer with an email address for her and put our site live. I recorded my voice saying "order up" as the email notification She loved it.

So you were on your way online, but there were some challenges, correct?

It took three months before we heard the first real "order up." Someone had visited CountryMeats.com and used the PHP form to order! In the next month we would receive five "order ups." Not convinced this was worth

doing, Dad wanted me to quit. We weren't making money with this thing, just spending to keep ourselves online. Sure, we knew the Internet was the future but maybe just not our future.

crafty enough to reverse engineer a PHP page was one thing. Databases, live customer chat, online customer accounts, an order form that doesn't allow customers to order the wrong amounts, syncing with QuickBooks,

"I felt like a pirate that looks through his telescope and then wets his thumb to feel the direction of the wind."

- Jeremy Geatches, Country Meats

I think a lot of business owners can relate to that. But you weren't ready to give up just yet, right?

I felt differently. Like a pirate that looks through his telescope and then wets his thumb to feel the direction of the wind I said, "Trust me, let's go this way." I even made Paul sign a promissory note that if we hit 100 cases ordered in one day from this website, then Country Meats writes me a check for a \$1,000 tax free. He agreed. So I asked anyone and everyone I knew to criticize my site and I dug in to make it better. More "order ups" came and in 15 months time we hit 100 cases sold online in a single day. Paul made good on the \$1,000. I was proud as punch.

You see my dad had his "thing" - he could make the sticks and knew how to cook them. My mom had her "thing" - she could sell ice to Eskimos. Paul had his "thing" because he was a wiz with finances and now I had my "thing" - technology and a website that proved itself extremely valuable.

So as time went on, you continued to expand upon what you had built.

After some years, our needs grew with our desire to capitalize on technology's ability to make us a better company by helping more customers, accurately and quickly. We live in a here and now world. Me being

interacting with various other APIs (and the list goes on), was a complete other thing. I was smart enough to call in a professional.

This professional had to be someone I could trust and someone I could work with and communicate with. Some one with the same values and passion for tech that we have for our business. Not just a Jedi but a Master Jedi - Alan. I had found Alan by chance when I hired a local company to make an order form for me that wouldn't allow a customer to order the wrong amount of bags of our product. I had trouble communicating with the salesman because he wasn't a programmer. I asked to speak directly to the guy that was building this and that's when I met Alan. We gelled immediately. I knew this was the guy I need in my technology arsenal. A year later, he was no longer with that company and free to help me. We built a site from the ground up and began adding all of my dream scenarios. I would dream it and he would build it.

So what prompted the decision to shift into cloud hosting?

The site was doing everything I wanted and more. It is a beast and our host was not a beauty. GoDaddy's database limits were full, email was slow and uptime wasn't 99%. Time for a new home for my next gen website. Alan did his research and gave me my options. I spoke with Calvin at Everleap and I felt comfortable. This was our new home.

“Our database is growing everyday. We learned from outgrowing GoDaddy’s shared hosting that the database options with Everleap are what we need as we move into the future.”

- Jeremy Geatches, Country Meats

**Did you try or consider any other cloud hosting provider?
What made you choose Everleap?**

I feel like we chose Everleap over others because of several factors. The cost was great. The capabilities to grow were inline with our projected future. We got the uptime we needed, as well as all the benefits of a cloud platform. Alan’s preliminary questions were met by knowledgeable and friendly staff. After we received the answers we needed, some time went by as we were getting ready for the move. You contacted us to see if there was anything you could do to help. That gesture made me feel even more comfortable and like you really cared about us.

**We do! How have things been since you made the switch?
How do you benefit from the Everleap platform?**

We benefit from Everleap’s cloud service by being up, with a quick response time, for every customer. If a potential customer stops at our site and is delayed, or encounters issues, then they will perceive it as a poor experience with Country Meats and leave. I can’t have that. I worked too hard and care too much for poor technology and crappy hosting to mess up my dream.

How has the customer service experience been?

I will proudly say it’s been “Country Meats like”. When someone contacts Country Meats by phone, they get right through to a human who has the power to help them and has the desire to take care of them. Calvin and the Everleap team made us feel the same way. I have heard this a lot - “It would be nice if my other issues in life could be taken care of by Country Meats.” I feel the same way

about Everleap.

What does the future hold for your business and how does Everleap factor in?

Because Alan, my web developer, is so talented and the response time of Everleap’s cloud server is so quick, we are able to create solutions to help customers, accounting, shipping and sales and all of it runs through one unified system on the web. It’s mobile where it needs to be and it’s stationary when the job calls for it.

Our database is growing everyday. We learned from outgrowing GoDaddy’s shared hosting that the “add more as you go” database space options with Everleap is what we need as we move into the future. Our business has been growing at about 20% per year over the last decade. We know Everleap can grow with us.

To learn more about Country Meats or to order snacks for your next fundraiser, please go to countrymeats.com ■

Everleap is modern hosting for today’s developer. Built by the team at DiscountASP.NET on top of Microsoft Windows Azure Pack, Everleap brings together the reliability and scalability of the big cloud hosting providers with the predictable pricing, bundled services, and ease of traditional web hosting.

[More information at Everleap.com](http://Everleap.com)