

Ellwood Keeps Data Outside US Jurisdiction with Cloud Hosting Overhaul

ElasticHosts Canada allows legal IT service to enjoy all the benefits of North American cloud hosting without putting information at risk

Ellwood provides IT consulting, project management and support to law firms across Canada. Having been in operation since 1984, the team is drawn from IT specialists to paralegals and forensic examiners and is trusted to handle highly sensitive data for its clients. For example, the case work division team handles forensics for litigation including hacking into passwords on computers and encrypted devices. Ellwood acts as the custodian for this data during the litigation process and is therefore under pressure to keep such information safe and confidential. As their own servers didn't have the capacity to cope with the amount of data being used, Ellwood began using a cloud service from ElasticHosts, delivered from its data centre in London. In doing this, it benefitted from the security and resilience of a hosted data centre environment, as well as the added flexibility and scalability of ElasticHosts' cloud servers.

However, faced with the latency of transferring data between Canada and the UK, Ellwood wanted to move data over to ElasticHosts' North American hub. At this point, the company was faced with a new challenge: how to benefit from hosting closer to home whilst ensuring their data remained confidential and available in the wake of US laws, such as the Patriot Act, the DMCA and the proposed SOPA legislation. It also faced the challenge of how to minimise disruption to customers as it began the process of moving data from one continent to the other.

"Our biggest challenge as a business working in the legal sector is ensuring that the data we look after for clients is never exposed to a third party," said Steve Ellwood, founder and president of Ellwood. "We use many US cloud services, but only for our own information. We would never let customer data anywhere near the US. If one of our customers were unable to access data during the litigation process because that information had been confiscated, it would be disastrous for that case. The firms we work with don't want to take that risk and the mere suggestion that this could happen is enough for them to take their business elsewhere. In fact, if we are found to be hosting data in a US data centre without their knowledge, customers would have no hesitation in taking action to sue us to their full ability."

Out on a limb – finding the right solution

Having established that hosting customer data in the US wasn't an option, Ellwood began to look for a way to continue realising the benefits of ElasticHosts' cloud service whilst not putting their business at risk. Ellwood therefore needed to find a provider that would tick the data privacy boxes, but still allow them to enjoy scalable, pay as you go cloud hosting. When told that ElasticHosts was to open a new data centre in Toronto, the news could not have come at a better time.

Hosting its data in ElasticHosts' new Toronto hub allows Ellwood to continue to experience the same cloud benefits that they had become accustomed to, whilst hosting closer to home means improved data speed and reduced latency. Moreover, the Toronto location falls outside of US jurisdiction, meaning Ellwood's customers' data is safe from US government seizure or third party takedown notices.

In addition, a key selling point in choosing to remain with ElasticHosts was the instant flexibility of the cloud offering. The practicalities of moving all the company's data from one centre to another was no small feat.

“Without the flexibility of ElasticHosts’ servers, the transfer all of our customer data from a data centre in the UK to the new data centre in Canada would have been a long and drawn out process. Through being able to scale up the capacity of our virtual servers, we can transfer all of our data in a much quicker time than we could with using another provider. Without ElasticHosts’ true cloud capabilities, this would have taken too long and cost too much to make the migration a possibility without major disruption to our business. Because of the flexibility of ElasticHosts’ servers, once we had moved all the information over to the new data centre, we were able to scale our capacity back down, so we are only ever paying for what we use.”

New growth and a fruitful future

With the migration to ElasticHosts’ Toronto data centre, Ellwood has been able to remain within the confines of Canadian legal context and remain unaffected by US legislation that otherwise would have made a move to the same continent impossible. Hosting data in Canada allows the company to avoid the pitfalls under this legislation and enabled it to maintain its longstanding relationship with the legal sector by ensuring the security of information that is essential to the future of its customers.

By using ElasticHosts’ server to manage the ongoing migration process itself, there has not been a moment where data was unavailable and there has been zero downtime. This means Ellwood’s customers have not been impacted by the move and will now simply notice the increased speeds afforded by hosting in the same country.

Once complete, Ellwood will have achieved all the geographical benefits of hosting closer to home including the improved speed of accessing their customers’ data while continuing to benefit from the flexible service that made them choose ElasticHosts in the first place.

“The continued privacy of our clients’ data is absolutely vital. It’s key to our customers in that cases can be won and lost on the integrity of the data presented. Therefore, keeping that information safe is clearly imperative to us as a business,” added Ellwood. “We have made our reputation on being a trusted partner to law firms. We simply couldn’t consider hosting legal case data in the US but we knew we needed to bring data closer to home. In working with ElasticHosts, we have been able to address both challenges. We are delighted that we will continue to benefit from working with ElasticHosts and that our customers can be 100% confident that their information is safe.”