



CASE STUDY

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS WHEN COVID TRIMS OPERATIONS

THE CUSTOMER

Great Clips

INDUSTRY

Personal Care Services

THE SOLUTIONS

Network & Server Management, Software Development, Architecture Analysis, 24x7 Remote Support & Monitoring

BENEFITS

- Continued business during COVID-19
- Consultative and trusted IT partner
- Comprehensive IT roadmap
- New customer-facing technology

THE SITUATION

On March 4, 2020, Great Clips had 4,501 salons open. By April 4th, they had 17. As the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the country and the world, businesses were left facing an uncertain future. For the world’s largest hair salon brand, having nearly all their franchisee-run salons close during a short window of time due to COVID restrictions was challenging — much as many other businesses experienced at this same time. COVID also impacted the corporate office team as the office was shut down.

Connie Hiber, Director of Technology Governance at Great Clips, underscored just how quickly the landscape changed, “Overnight we transitioned to everyone working at home. Over the course of a couple of weeks, we saw almost all Great Clips salons shut down.”

As Great Clips awaited the time their franchisees could reopen their doors, they began planning as they knew changes would

be needed to make this re-opening possible. Once salons were clear to reopen, customers would likely be lined up to have their hair cut, expecting enhanced safety protocols that would alter the in-salon experience for customers . Great Clips needed to prepare customers and franchisees for this new normal —and they needed to do it fast.

While rapidly planning for salons to reopen was of the utmost importance, Great Clips still faced a substantial short-term hurdle. Revenue streams were cut off, creating an immediate need to evaluate their technology services for cost savings. With these multi-faceted needs, Great Clips required a partner that understood their business and that could respond with agility and care to the challenges before them. As they have for the last 10 years, Great Clips looked to Atomic Data for direction and assistance in this area.

THE PROCESS

Atomic Data engineers quickly and effectively analyzed the technology environment to align server resources and identify opportunities for cost savings, while simultaneously focusing on Great Clips' evolving priorities in responding to the pandemic.

Atomic Data's Enterprise Account Coordinator met regularly with the Great Clips team to strategize, review reports and discuss architecture. In the course of these discussions, the need to ramp up technology to improve the customer experience became clear. Atomic Data was able to meet that need with systems

support and software development assistance that addressed the new challenges the global pandemic had introduced.

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THE DETAILS

Leveraging a moment of opportunity, Atomic Data devised a plan where resources could be temporarily dialed down to gain cost savings during the momentary lull in business. To further this goal, the team also brought some systems in the Atomic Cloud® over to Great Clips infrastructure. Atomic Data worked with Great Clips to deploy Cloudflare, a content delivery network service that would help with load balancing and distributed denial of service (DDoS) protection for their website — ultimately leading to increased uptime, cost savings and an improved customer experience.



From 17 open salons on April 4th, the following three months saw nearly all salons return to operations. With salons reopening rapidly came a massive uptick in traffic to both the website and mobile app. The number of people signing up for accounts and using online check-in capabilities skyrocketed, and Atomic Data was able to respond quickly by elastically dialing up network and server resources to handle the surge.

"Atomic was, as they always are, right there to help us out and figure out what was going on. The team was on the phone with us to diagnose the problem and come up with potential solutions

and take immediate steps to expand our footprint so we could support all the traffic that was coming through," said Jennifer Huwe, Director of Solutions Delivery.

"The biggest challenge was when salons opened at 8 o'clock in the morning — the website was getting slammed for three hours straight. We needed to make significant but incremental changes" said Connie Hiber. To respond to evolving needs, Great Clips and Atomic Data worked together to identify and implement small but impactful changes. Atomic Data would then monitor the results and return to Great Clips on a weekly basis to discuss results and plan the next round of changes. This phased approach helped to substantially alleviate the stress on the website.

Great Clips already had in place their industry-leading Online Check-In service powered by Net Check-In™ developed by Innovative Computer Software. This service allows customers to add their name to the wait list from outside the salon and spend their wait time however they choose. The service provides a count down of the estimated wait time that customers can monitor on their device.

With COVID restrictions, there was a further need to help



manage customer flow in the salon. To address this, Great Clips supplemented the Online Check-In service with a new offering, ReadyNet Text. ReadyNext Text notifies customers when their estimated wait time reaches 15 minutes and asks them to head to the salon.

The Software Development team at Atomic Data was instrumental in the development of Great Clips' ReadyNext Text alert system. After initial successes with ReadyNext Text,

THE BENEFITS

Atomic Data monitored the environment and advised Great Clips on how to proceed, helping them understand the changes, and whether they were getting the desired results. It was this responsiveness and follow-through that helped Great Clips keep things running smoothly during intensely challenging times. "Atomic really helped us keep the lights on, adjust to the traffic we weren't expecting, and navigate through so that we didn't have outages," said Jennifer Huwe.

As Great Clips continues to share their road map, Atomic Data continues to partner with them to help make their goals reality.

Atomic Data moved to supporting the development and roll out of phase two of the system, which offers walk-in customers the same flexibility as those who check-in online.

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Having successfully completed the ReadyNext system and dozens of projects before it, both teams look forward to future partnership on new technology that will continue to improve the already outstanding customer experience.

The partnership thrives on a deep commitment by Atomic Data to agility, responsiveness, and open communication. And through these principles, Atomic Data continues to empower Great Clips to meet their business goals with technology.

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