

# FreemERCHANT Jump-starts 2,000 e-Commerce Sites per Month, Scales its Infrastructure with Coyote Point's Equalizer

"Scalability or death" is the watchword for an e-commerce network that's shepherded 3,000 new Web stores online this year -- and is routing customer traffic from all of them through its own Web site. When growth is geometric and capital is finite, how to ensure 24x7 availability to each store?

That's the core technological challenge for FreemERCHANT ([www.freemERCHANT.com](http://www.freemERCHANT.com)), a December 1998 startup deploying a stunningly simple and original e-commerce network concept. Free of charge, FreemERCHANT offers Internet startups the use of a comprehensive suite of the applications and services necessary to go online. The free package of proprietary software and services includes site hosting, store-building tools, a credit card processing interface, and shopping cart and product catalog software.

By providing this grub stake to member stores, FreemERCHANT has built a membership base that makes the company an attractive business partner to providers of merchant services, Web promotion, and a range of other b-to-b (and e-to-e) services, which FreemERCHANT offers to member stores at a discount.

With 3,000 stores signed on since FreemERCHANT's December '98 startup, 2,000 more slated for the end of May, and 20,000 anticipated by year's end, FreemERCHANT needs an infrastructure that can scale without spending huge sums on excess capacity. Fortunately, the company has found a tool that :

- ensures continuous uptime for all FreemERCHANT stores
- keeps connection times fast
- provides maximum scalability.

This tool is Coyote Point's Equalizer, an intelligent load balancer that provides highly efficient failover, sophisticated traffic routing capabilities, and a browser-based graphical display of server performance that is the best trending analysis tool in the business. Starting at \$3,995, Equalizer also costs less than half of comparable products.

## **Server Performance Data = Scalability**

"First and foremost, Equalizer provides continuous uptime to all our stores, automatically routing traffic around any server that goes down for any reason," explained Serge Wilson, FreemERCHANT's founder and CEO. "But its chief competitive advantage over other load balancers -- and we have tested several -- is its graphical interface." "The key to effective scaling is metrics," continued Mr. Wilson. "To plan, build and implement an effective infrastructure, you've got to have hard information that will allow a normal budgeting process, even when capacity growth is likely to be extraordinary. Equalizer provides us with trending analysis that is truly priceless. Its display of server performance shows at a glance, in real time, how many people are hitting each cluster and each server -- and most important, the response



time per server. That makes short-term scaling ridiculously easy: when response time crosses a predetermined threshold, it's time to add another server. For the longer term, future hardware needs can be calculated on the basis of real numbers."

### **Getting the Most of Each Server**

Equalizer routes traffic according to multiple criteria, including server response time, number of requests pending at each server, measurements taken directly on the server using optional server agents, and weighted values assigned to each server by the system administrator. This fine-grained traffic distribution ensures that each server is used to maximum capacity. And when new hardware needs to be added, "Equalizer allows us to scale our capacity where needed in minutes simply by adding another server to a cluster group," Wilson explained. Freemerkant has integrated Equalizer into its proprietary management infrastructure, using Equalizer's flexible APIs to redirect traffic around servers as automatic maintenance routines are performed. When maintenance is complete, the servers are seamlessly reintegrated into the cluster.

### **Flexibility/Stability**

Freemerkant's startup software package includes programs that run on a variety of operating systems, including Unix, Windows NT, and Windows '98. Equalizer, which works equally well with all operating systems, is ideally suited to handle this diversity. At the same time, Equalizer offers maximum stability, since its networking kernel is based upon the BSD kernel, widely recognized as one of the best and most stable TCP/IP implementations. "By interfacing with all operating systems, Equalizer supports our commitment to bringing the best tools to bear on each application, regardless of operating system, without sacrificing system stability," Wilson commented.

### **Breaking with Industry "Tradition"**

Having run a systems integration company for the past ten years, Mr. Wilson appreciates a product that does everything it's supposed to. "In the high-tech industry, manufacturers have all but developed a tradition not to deliver -- it's become almost a reflex to expect that a product will do maybe 85% of what it's supposed to. Equalizer breaks with that tradition --in fact, it does more than advertised. That kind of reliability is invaluable to a company that can expect, without hype, to grow tenfold within a year. We're delighted to have Equalizer to help us manage that growth."

### **About Coyote Point Systems**

Coyote Point Systems, Inc. is a leading provider of server management devices for enabling scalable, highly-available server clusters. Recognized for intuitive configuration and low maintenance, price/performance and superior trending analysis, Coyote Point's Equalizer ensures fast connections and fail-safe 24x7 access to web sites and other critical Internet and intranet applications. Envoy, a software add-on, enables Equalizer to direct online traffic across multiple server clusters located anywhere in the world. Coyote Point solutions support all Internet protocols and accommodate all operating systems. The company is headquartered in San Jose, CA and can be contacted directly at 650-969-6000 or on the web at

[www.coyotepoint.com](http://www.coyotepoint.com)