

Opening the doors to Green sponsorship in B.C.

Featuring: Atum (IBM Business Partner) & Green Party of B.C. (customer)
Case-study written by Info-Tech Research Group



Greening the Green Party of B.C.

The Customer

The Green Party of B.C. is part of a worldwide movement for political change. There are more than 100 Green Parties around the world, which promote the concepts of sustainability, social justice, grassroots democracy, diversity, decentralization, global responsibility and ecological wisdom. The party is committed to sustaining economic competitiveness while greening the economy and creating new jobs.

The Challenge

The Green Party of B.C. required a website where anyone, regardless of location, could submit a donation. Rebecca Helps, the party's executive director, knew what she wanted to accomplish, but wasn't sure how to go about doing it, and didn't have an IT department to help her find a solution. But one requirement was certain: The Green Party wanted a green vendor that fit closely with the organization's beliefs. It was also important to find a highly secure solution so all donor information — including credit card numbers — would be safe.

The Green Party considered going with a managed solution from an IT hosting company, which would allow them to stabilize costs and focus on their core business. And a virtualized IT environment would help them reduce their energy consumption. But there was a catch: They needed the solution to be up and running within a quick timeframe of three weeks.

The Solution

Atum is an IT hosting company that provides dedicated virtual private server hosting and proactive monitoring. It offers managed solutions to clients, which includes backup, security and patching, as well as disk utilization monitoring. Atum bills itself as being unique in a relatively congested market for managed services by offering dedicated virtual hosting, which means clients do not share allocated virtual resources, differentiating Atum from other VPS hosting providers.

"This allows smaller businesses to have an IT infrastructure without any of the 'what ifs,' and they're able to put solutions in place that are comparable to larger businesses with their own IT staff," said John Posan, Atum's business development director.





Atum strictly uses IBM hardware in its tier-four data centre. “There are a lot of cheap hardware vendors out there. There’s also the option of buying white box servers and building everything from scratch, which can save you a significant amount of money,” said Posan. But Atum wanted to differentiate itself in the managed services market.

“It was an obvious choice to pick IBM. They’re a leader in infrastructure solutions, so we decided to only offer our server hosting on IBM equipment,” he said. “That was a big step for us because it doesn’t allow us to be the cheapest hosting company out there. But when potential clients find out we’d rather lose that revenue than compromise on quality, it’s actually an important factor for them in choosing to partner with us.”

IBM also offers energy-efficient equipment, which was a major factor in the Green Party’s decision to go with Atum over another vendor they were considering. Servers typically run at around three per cent peak average utilization, which adds up to four per cent of global carbon emissions. A single virtual energy-efficient server can save up to half a ton of carbon dioxide per year. For the Green Party of B.C., Atum chose IBM’s X3650ME energy-efficient server.

It also takes 10 times the weight of a PC in chemicals and fossil fuels to make one, yet as much as one million tons of electronic equipment become obsolete each year. So, when Atum signs on a new client to virtualization, it offers to buy their hardware and reuse it or recycle it through its partner recycling company.



“Our biggest challenge was figuring out an innovative way to meet the Green Party’s requirements for a sustainable, low-cost solution, yet provide everything they needed in a secure fashion — all within a timeframe of three weeks,” said Posan.

Atum set up a dedicated virtual private server with third-party donor software. It then developed a custom virtual private network interface, which ensures all of the data transferred between a donor and the server is done over a secure link. Atum provides managed backup, so the Green Party doesn’t have to worry about losing donations or receipts. Now, the Green Party has a central managed portal where anyone can make a secure donation at any time, from any location.

“The first time Rebecca logged in and made a donation she understood how simple it was, and that was the moment when she was really stoked about the solution,” said Posan.

This solution has allowed the Green Party to take advantage of an existing infrastructure, resulting in significant savings of hardware, power and space. So far, they’ve saved about 90 per cent of traditional server costs and about 85 per cent in energy use. Not only did the solution significantly decrease energy use, it also reduced toxic waste (since no new servers were bought) and eliminated the need for recycling.

The Green Party expects this will result in energy savings of 14,454 kilowatt-hours per year, as well as savings of 33,244 lbs of carbon dioxide per year. And, when Helps goes to sleep at night, she doesn’t have to worry about the system going down and missing out on a big donation.

The Green Party of B.C. is continuing to purchase licenses from Atum and expand the solution. Atum is now in discussions with other divisions of the Green Party across Canada to set up similar solutions — helping the Green Party to green its IT.

