

Present helps Sodisco-Howden to grow and improve its profitability

Present enables Sodisco-Howden to manage its computing infrastructure more efficiently



Founded in Victoriaville in 1882 by the Auger family, Sodisco, originally a supply company for common carriers and blacksmiths, over time would become a major distributor of hardware that would expand throughout the province. Also in 1882, but in Watford, Ontario, David Howden founded his hardware business. Over the course of acquisitions just about everywhere in Ontario, D.H. Howden & Co would become a major wholesaler in hardware products.

In 1987, the two companies joined forces and today Sodisco-Howden is the leader and the largest Canadian hardware distributor serving independent retailers. The company's head office is now based in Montreal, but Sodisco-Howden owns distribution centres in Victoriaville, London, Ontario, and Langley, British Columbia. Sodisco-Howden supplies over 75,000 different hardware and construction products and renovation materials to its clientele of over 1800 independent retailers. These 1800 retailers operate their stores under their own name or under the PRO and ACE banners, owned by Sodisco-Howden.

Critical computing needs

Supplying such an impressive range of products to so many retailers from several distribution centres requires strict management of all of the company's activities. This is why meeting Sodisco-Howden's computing needs has always been a key element in the company's success. Finances, inventory, costing, stock management and good customer service all depend upon a highly efficient computer system.

A long-time customer of IBM, Sodisco-Howden has always been very happy with the products and services provided. The company has been working with IBM for almost 25 years, and has always proved to be fully satisfied with the equipment and the service received.

Around the turn of the millennium, when it was time for Sodisco-Howden to renew its service contracts, IBM suggested that the company do business with one of its many business partners and provided the names of three partners, including Present. It was with Present that Sodisco-Howden decided to do business to renew its service contracts. "A business relationship develops slowly," says Alain Grondin, head of information systems,



technological research and operations at Sodisco-Howden. "With Present, a relationship of trust was established. The people at Present have always been readily available and it has always been easy to find solutions to our problems. With Present, you always get a straight answer and a fair price."

Ensuring long-term growth

At the beginning of 2003, with the acquisition of Ace Hardware and the ensuing growth, it became clear to Sodisco-Howden that they had to improve their fleet of servers. The AS/400 servers needed increased efficiency in order to improve customer service and profitability, while improving inventory management between the various distribution centres.

Naturally, Mr. Grondin turned to Present to assess the situation. Present's technicians were able to show Mr. Grondin that investing in new equipment rather than keeping and updating the existing equipment was far more profitable, as a return on investment would be achieved in less than three years. Consequently, Present suggested consolidating the existing AS/400 servers into one iSeries 810-2466 server with three logical partitions, which would make it possible to create three machines inside of just one and use a less expensive level of software group.

In May 2004, Sodisco-Howden purchased new ERP software, Peoplesoft's Enterprise One solution. This kind of tool required the setup of several components. In collaboration with Present and IBM, Sodisco-Howden examined their infrastructural needs and decided to purchase an iSeries 825 server with four active processors, two OnDemand processors and three

logical partitions. This solution also included the installation of the Websphere Application Server and the use of six xSeries servers connected to the iSeries 825 server via IXA (Integrated xSeries Adapter) cards.

"It was very important for us to centralize the management of our Windows servers on just one machine.

If we lose a server, we must be able to bring the machine back up within a very short time; otherwise, all of our operations across Canada may be affected. Our new iSeries allows us to do this. Management is easier because now we use just one machine. In addition, with this kind of equipment, we save on hardware and software maintenance contracts," Mr. Grondin says.

The iSeries 825 server precisely meets Sodisco-Howden's growth requirements, as it makes it possible to activate additional processors very quickly if necessary, because these processors are already available on the server. To activate them, all Sodisco-Howden has to do is purchase an activation key. It's that easy. Virtual allocation of memory and processors makes it possible to manage periods of peak demand more efficiently, because the machine is able to provide more power when needed by momentarily using the power of other servers that do not necessarily need as much at that precise moment.

A dedicated and flexible team

A few months later, the project is almost entirely completed. Despite very tight schedules, Present's team of technicians succeeded in adhering to all deliverables. "Throughout the installation, Present's team always worked with professionalism. I was never worried, as they worked very hard and quickly to put the

infrastructure in place. Their knowledge of the iSeries and Windows integration was definitely a key factor in the success of this installation. I really like working with this team. The people are always readily available, the technicians know what they're doing, and always find solutions in the end," Mr. Grondin added.

And today, now that Sodisco-Howden has begun to use its new infrastructure, is Mr. Grondin pleased? "Indeed ...it works very well! We have never seen a server with this kind of performance. The IBM iSeries is truly the server we needed for our ERP software. We have a really solid setup and we are looking toward the future with confidence!"

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| IBM Premier Business Partner: | Present |
| Customer: | Sodisco-Howden |
| Industry sector: | Hardware Distribution, construction and renovation materials |
| Applications: | Server consolidation and new ERP Peoplesoft Enterprise One 8.9 |
| Hardware: | iSeries 810 1 way, 3GB, .7TB iSeries 825 4 way, 9GB, 1.2TB, 6 IXA |
| Software: | Websphere Application Server |

For additional information on how **Present** can help your organization, contact us at **1-866-IBM-BP4U**, or visit our Web site at **www.present.ca**.