

The Vancouver Sun Fusepoint takes the worry out of IT

Fusepoint CEO Robert Offley and CTO Matej Sustic discuss the advantages of strategic IT services outsourcing with CanWest News Services' business reporter Peter Wilson. Robert Offley wants businesses to think of information technology as something akin to electricity. "You click on the switch when you walk in the room and you click it off when you don't need it," said Offley, CEO of Vancouver and Toronto-based Fusepoint Managed Services. In other words, IT should be a perceived as a utility -- something that's there for small to medium-sized organizations when they need it, but not something they have to worry about. "Why do you want to have to become an expert on 15 different software packages? Why do you want to have to worry about security? Why do you want to be carrying around a pager and dealing with all these issues that aren't core to your business?" It is this logic that has led Fusepoint to be one of the major players in Canada for IT outsourcing.

Fusepoint takes the worry out of IT

The outsourcing company provides as much technology as a customer needs

BY PETER WILSON
VANCOUVER SUN

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"If you're trying to be a forestry commission, for example, why do you want to worry about all the asset management and the hardware?" asks Offley.

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Unlike the giants in the field like IBM, Fusepoint isn't necessarily looking to

take over the entire IT operations of an organization. It will take on however much of it a company wants.

"Most companies don't want to outsource everything," said Offley.

"We look at in terms of what makes sense."

A typical company, added Offley, might have some critical applications it can support in-house.

"Then they have a piece of infrastructure that's more critical and has more security content and they don't have those special skills then it may make economic sense to outsource it."

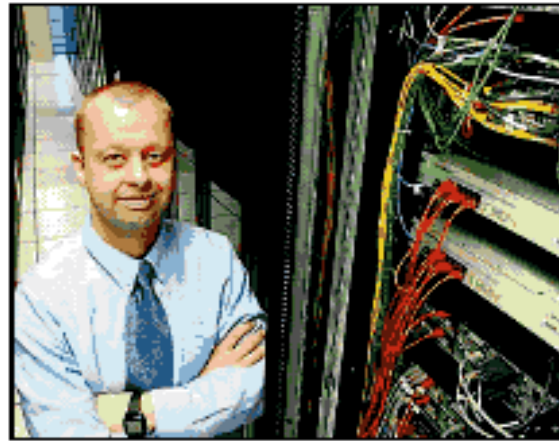
Offley added that in outsourcing its IT a company typically saves 30 per cent.

In a second scenario, said Fusepoint's chief technical officer, Matej Sustic, a company may be looking to do something new that requires IT support.

In that case, Fusepoint can design a whole new system for the company and operate it.

Among its clients Fusepoint numbers The Royal Canadian Mint, the North Shore Credit Union, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Fincentric and Infowave.

In making the electricity analogy, Offley, whose four-year-old company falls into the currently buzz-acronym category of SISP (Systems



IAN SMITH/VANCOUVER SUN

Matej Sustic of Fusepoint, which has a data centre that's shielded from break-ins, earthquakes and viruses.

Infrastructure Service Provider), echoes a recent report on the Canadian SISP industry by consultants IDC that said the notion of IT as a utility is "particularly compelling" for smaller companies that do not require the customized services of large businesses.

In the report, IDC -- which predicts SISP spending in Canada will reach \$680 million by 2007, up from \$409 million in 2003 -- named Fusepoint, which competes in an area with giants like Bell and Telus, as a company to watch in 2004.

Fusepoint, which has data centres in both Vancouver and Toronto, emphasizes security as one of the key elements it can provide, including protection against data theft and viruses.

"We have a team of people who are 24 by seven hours looking for any attacks on our customers," said Offley. "We're constantly looking to

see if there are any new viruses coming out.

"Now your typical mid-sized company doesn't have a security expert. And your typical (large) enterprise maybe has one, and he's not 24/7."

Another element that Offley emphasizes is the constant availability of data, which is stored on Fusepoint servers that sit in earthquake-proof racks.

Both data centres -- which sometimes hold duplicates of a company's data in Toronto and Vancouver -- have four and a half megawatts of uninterrupted power.

"From our facility we could actually power a small town. How can you do that if you're a mid-sized company?"

Offley said that in the blackout in Toronto in the summer of 2003 none of Fusepoint's customers was down.

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