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# Dual-Site Data Centre Colocation Services Help Saxon Energy Ensure Continuous Operations Worldwide and Support Growth.

“With our centralized computing model and with drilling rigs operating worldwide, our staff needs to stay connected and access key business applications 7x24, so we can’t afford any downtime, and with Q9 we’ve had none.” - Manager, IT Infrastructure & Operations

Saxon Energy Services is a growing international oilfield services company with a fleet of 98 drilling rigs in 10 countries. Drilling operations, which began in Ecuador in 2005, have expanded to include nearly 4,000 employees operating throughout the Americas and Australia as well as in Oman, Pakistan and other Middle Eastern countries.

In March 2014, after the acquisition of Saxon by French company Schlumberger Ltd, the world’s largest oilfield services provider, Saxon’s head office moved from Calgary to Houston, while the firm’s information technology and engineering groups remained in Calgary.



CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	RESULTS
Saxon Energy Services needed a more reliable and scalable data centre to host IT infrastructure supporting 16 offices, 98 drilling rigs and nearly 4,000 people operating in countries across the globe.	Q9’s dual-site solution gives Saxon space, power, cooling, Internet connectivity, physical security, fire control and 7x24 monitoring for computer equipment collocated at separate primary and secondary data centre locations.	A more robust and professional data centre environment ensures that Saxon employees worldwide experience uninterrupted communications with management and colleagues and have 7x24 remote access to critical business applications to maintain continuous operations.

## Legacy Data Centre Falls Short in Reliability and Scalability

Information technology is fundamental to Saxon’s ongoing operations and success. Central to Saxon’s IT environment is their communications and networking infrastructure. Satellite uplinks installed on each oilfield rig allow data to be uploaded from each drilling site, for example, and provide telephone services so staff can connect with other Saxon rigs and offices globally. The satellite links also provide access to the Internet so staff can remotely access Saxon’s key business applications centrally located in Calgary, including email and databases.

Initially, Saxon operated an in-house data centre for the hardware infrastructure required to support these critical business applications. With rapid company growth, however, the data centre was unable to keep up with the demand for more computing power and the growing number of users.



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To address its data centre problems, Saxon decided to outsource its data centre to a small, local data centre services provider. However, according to Steven Williams, Manager of IT Infrastructure and Operations, Saxon Energy Services Inc., the service provider experienced issues or outages nearly every month. After struggling with this arrangement for almost two years, Saxon realized the firm they chose simply could not provide the uptime or redundancy they were looking for, so they decided to move their infrastructure to a top-tier facility instead.

## Access and Uptime Favour Q9 Choice

After completing a rigorous review of a number of providers, Williams and Brad Krol, Saxon's Director of IT, chose to collocate their IT infrastructure at the Q9 data centre in downtown Calgary.

"We chose Q9 because they are a leader in the industry and we wanted something near our office, for quick and easy access by our staff who will be adding new equipment to our infrastructure as we continue to grow," says Williams, who goes on to say that he had previously worked for another company that had also outsourced to Q9 and as a result, he was familiar with Q9's reputation and capabilities.

"Coming from a data centre that had issues every month, we were really looking for the redundancy, reliability and ability to scale that Q9 offers," says Williams.

Even though Saxon also has data centres in the US, Bogota, Australia and Dubai, the company's major business applications, and the hardware infrastructure to support them, are all centralized in Q9 data centres in Calgary.

## Dual-Site Solution Offers Affordable Disaster Recovery

Saxon also received an additional benefit from its arrangement with Q9 in the form of an affordable disaster recovery solution – a backup site at a second Q9 data centre in southeast Calgary.

"When we began discussions with Q9, we were just looking for a primary data centre service, but Q9 was also able to offer us a secondary site at very little extra cost, including a free 100 Mbps dark fibre link between the two sites," says Williams. "This was a big benefit to us since we didn't have a disaster recovery solution previously."

Although Saxon bought new hardware for its primary Q9 data centre, they were able to keep the cost of their secondary site down by using equipment previously located in their legacy data centre. New NetApp appliances installed at both sites manage storage and replicate data on an ongoing basis from the primary site to the backup site in near-real time.

"It is of considerable comfort to know that we can be back up and running with all our critical business applications at the secondary site in just a couple of hours if something happens to our primary infrastructure," says Williams.

## Uninterruptible Internet Connectivity a Big Plus

"Our move to Q9 went so smoothly I can barely remember it happening," says Williams.

Along with provisioning the cabinets and power for Saxon's equipment and implementing 7x24 security and environmental monitoring, Q9 assigned a network engineer to help Saxon IT staff take advantage of Q9's unique Internet connection service and set up connections through Saxon's redundant firewalls. The Internet service aggregates connectivity provided by dozens of leading ISPs into a single, redundant, highly reliable connection for customers.

"Internet connectivity was a big plus for us in moving to Q9," says Williams. "Previously, we only had two Internet connections, but with 16 offices and 98 rigs operating globally and all connecting back to the data centre, we want to ensure our network is solid. The Q9 managed bandwidth service provides that reliability."

## Neither Fire nor Flood ...

Saxon reports they have not had a single outage and that uptime has been flawless in the three years since moving their infrastructure into Q9 data centres, despite several disasters that have hit the region, including a flash fire at the Shaw Communications building in downtown Calgary in July, 2012 that shut down cable, telephone and Internet services to Shaw customers.



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"Because of the built-in redundancy of Q9's Internet access, which aggregates service from many ISPs, Internet access for Saxon users was not interrupted," reports Williams. "We didn't experience even the slightest blip in our operations at the Q9 data centres or with our global connectivity."

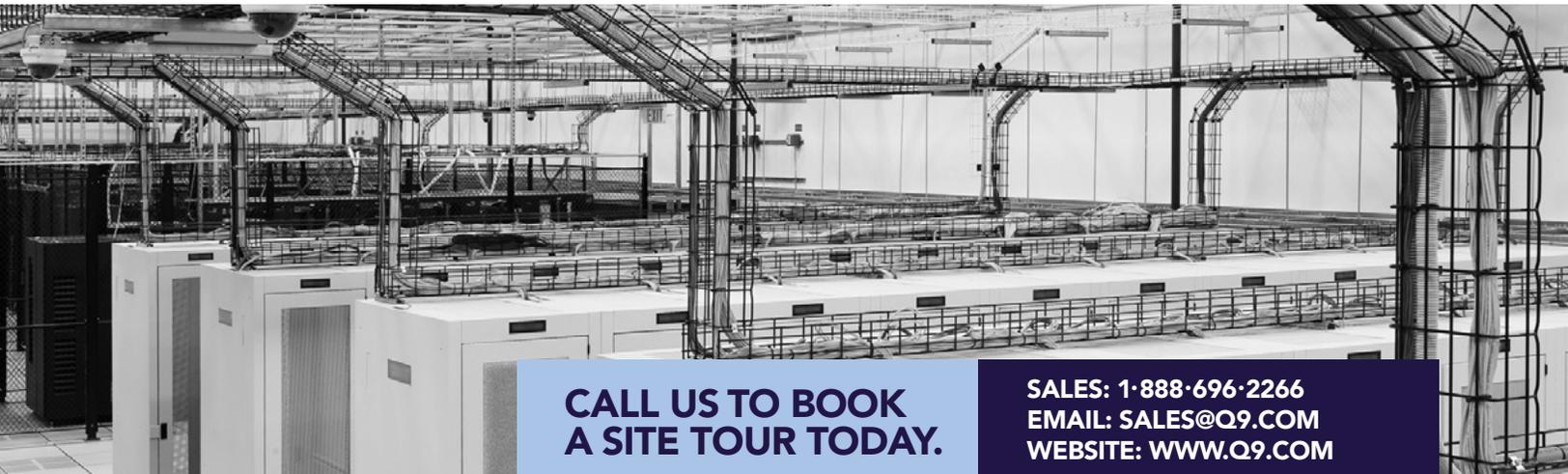
In June, 2013, when excessive rainfall triggered catastrophic flooding in downtown Calgary, said to be the worst disaster in Alberta's history and the costliest in Canadian history, power to the Saxon office was cut. According to Williams, however, all Saxon global offices and rigs were still able to connect to their primary data centre at Q9 and were not even aware of the flood.

Williams adds that Q9's complimentary "Emergency Hands & Eyes" services have also been a big help to him and his staff. He cites how easily they were able to connect with someone by phone at Q9 on a Boxing Day and talk them through resetting a piece of Saxon's hardware. "This was excellent service, and thanks to Q9, no one from our group had to travel downtown on a holiday to perform that task."

## Planning and Preparation Support Continued Growth

Saxon Energy is still forecasting large growth and Q9 is helping them by proactively identifying future data centre requirements.

"We appreciate that because we don't want to run into a situation where we are scrambling for additional capacity," says Williams, concluding: "Q9 has very defined standards and prescribed ways for how they do things, even for something as simple as setting up data centre access for a new employee, yet everything is done quickly and efficiently. This type of culture is very helpful to Saxon because we too are trying to standardize everything since we have a relatively small team for the size of the IT infra - structure and number of users we are supporting."



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