

How to Host a NANOG Meeting

Joe Abley – NANOG 39 – Toronto – Feb 2007

Starting Points

- How did NANOG wind up in Toronto?
- What locations are we looking at for meetings over the next 18-24 months?
- What is broken?
- What can we fix?

NANOG 39

- Merit had early conversations with some potential hosts for NANOG 39 in April/May 2006, but hotel costs were too high
- I picked this up from steering committee discussions, and floated the idea of a TorIX-hosted meeting on a TorIX list

Rabble-Rousing

- We made a new “TorIX/NANOG” list and filled it with 20 or so people who had expressed interest in helping
- Called Tourism Toronto and got a list of downtown hotels that had a 10,000 sq. ft ballroom
- Four hotels, only one had availability

About TorIX

- The TorIX doesn't have vast piles of cash lying around to throw at fun ideas like hosting a meeting, but they do have people
 - people who run ISPs
- We moved forward on the basis that if bandwidth is usually the most expensive/difficult thing to organise, we can probably sort something out for free

Transit Options

- It seemed important to find out for sure that we had an affordable transit option early on
- Various TorIX volunteers had experience in providing 30-40Mbit/s access within the city over bonded SHDSL
- We became fairly confident that we could do *something* for transit

Teleglobe (VSNLI)

- Sylvie contacted me in June asking whether Teleglobe could help
 - provide transit to the TorIX-connected ISP for the duration of the meeting
 - great enthusiasm for helping the meeting happen in Toronto

Hotel Visit

- Dave Gilbert and I visited the Sheraton in August and did our best to scare Steven Barclay and Simon Sit by the prospect of hundreds of wifi-toting, T-shirted geeks roaming the hotel looking for power sockets
- couldn't see meeting space as it wasn't built out at that time
- inspected the telco room and admired all the Bell copper

Hotel Contract

- We had a draft proposal from the hotel for quite a while before Merit saw it
- communications problems between the various volunteers, mainly
- also, it turns out that hotels are not good at getting things done via e-mail

NANOG 38

- Sylvie and I met in St Louis with Betty
- There were some outstanding problems with the hotel contract
 - ballroom power costs
 - A/V costs
 - transit alternatives to the SHDSL path

NANOG 38

- Sylvie offered financial assistance from Teleglobe to cover the dollar-related problems
- Teleglobe became the official co-host with TorIX
- Although we did not have a signed hotel contract, Merit and the SC had sufficient confidence to announce the location

Hotel Contracts

- The Sheraton had recently spent a lot of time and money installing an ethernet network to satisfy what they thought were the needs of meetings such as NANOG
- Conference calls were required to find a compromise which would not disrupt the hotel infrastructure, but which would suit NANOG

Hotel Contracts

- Contracts were finally signed and exchanged on 2 November 2006
- Contained very specific terms related to the use of hotel IT infrastructure
- hotel staff in fact have been very flexible on-site and have been very amenable to lateral thinking, despite the contract restrictions

Transit

- The only carrier with fibre into the building is Bell Canada (we also tried Toronto Hydro Telecom, but they would need to do a build)
- Teleglobe purchased a short lease on an OC3 between the hotel and 151 Front
- Plan emerged for a multi-homed network meeting, with external connectivity provided by both hosts

Equipment

- OC3 was scheduled to arrive 2-3 weeks before Merit would arrive to do meeting setup
- Polled the TorIX for a loaner router
- Research in Motion pulled a lab router off the shelf
- Scott Silzer picked it up and drove it to Toronto, and then spent about 4 days repairing it :-)

Equipment

- Force10 sent some switches, in case they were needed
- Cisco donated some switches to Merit
- Four or five TorIX members had spare switches available

T-Shirt

- An old friend of Nistor, Jonathan Davis designed the t-shirt
 - he's not here; he moved to Calgary
 - we're sending him some extra shirts

T-Shirt



Sponsors

- We looked hard for sponsors, but we didn't start early enough
- Teleglobe stepped in to join the Beer'n'Gear
 - we like Teleglobe
- Afilias and CIRA were brought in as break sponsors

Registration

- We were well into January and attendance numbers looked scary-low
- Content trickled onto the Agenda as the PC approved presentations
- Next time we Cancel Christmas
- Active recruitment
 - high local attendance, healthy meeting size

Registration Fees

- There were a good handful of interesting people at local ISPs that couldn't get funding to attend
- volunteers were needed for meeting setup and registration desk
- nice way of making sure locals are able to contribute with their presence

Improvements

- The hotel contract would have progressed far more rapidly if we had had an on-site meeting between Merit, the hosts and the hotel
- Answering questions by e-mail is not the best way to deal with hotels
- We should have started recruiting sponsors six months before we did

Weather

- The weather turns out not to be so good this week :-)
- not much we can do about that
- There are definitely people who tell us that they didn't come to this meeting because it's Toronto, and it's February
- seems to me that we made up the numbers with locals who wouldn't normally be able to be funded for travel to the US

What Worked?

- The TorIX has a near endless supply of enthusiastic volunteers in easy reach, but no money
- Teleglobe had few (perhaps none? Sylvie?) engineering staff based in Toronto, but they had budget
- The two co-hosts complemented each other nicely

Merit Are Great

- Merit staff were fabulously proficient at setting up the hotel for the meeting
 - almost all the work required by the host was over as soon as Merit arrived
 - mainly just being available in case we had local issues with transit, etc

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