

CASE STUDY



Datapipe enables ToolBank USA to provide mobile unit for tool lending in disaster areas

ORGANIZATION:

ToolBank USA brings “Tools for Change” to America, a national movement to deliver high-quality tools to nonprofits and their volunteers.

CHALLENGE:

To expand into new cities as well as launching the mobile unit, the organization needed reliable connectivity and an effective tool tracking system.

SOLUTION:

Datapipe Managed Hybrid Cloud



US: +1 877 773 3306 UK: +44 800 634 3414 HK: +852 3521 0215

FINDING THE PERFECT CLOUD SOLUTION

SNAPSHOT

Since 2008, the Atlanta ToolBank has been lending tools to churches, neighborhood organizations and other nonprofit agencies across the southern capital. Now operating in four cities and with nearly 200 types of tools available, including power tools, safety gear and ice chests, ToolBanks play a crucial role in local volunteers building playgrounds, renovating community centers and many other needed projects. ToolBanks have been especially instrumental in helping charitable organizations provide urgent home repairs to senior citizens' homes that have fallen into despair.

THE CHALLENGE

In the early 2000s, the flagship ToolBank in Atlanta used a Microsoft Access database to track tool lending; however, the system was inefficient. "We had no count of the tools, no reservation system and we were generating receipts with a calculator," says Mark Brodbeck, CEO of ToolBank USA. After seeing the benefits and impact that ToolBank had on the Atlanta community, the leadership team wanted to expand the organization to additional cities within the US. However, expansion was not feasible until a centralized and scalable tracking and reservation system was implemented.

As part of the expansion plans, ToolBank USA also began researching the challenges facing the disaster relief community to learn how to best help organizations around the country fulfill their mission of helping others. After polling over 60 organizations including FEMA, Red Cross and various faith-based organizations, ToolBank discovered a significant need for additional tools at disaster-stricken areas after floods, fires, hurricanes and tornados.

"Americans are very generous and many will jump in their car and drive to the area to provide assistance without being a member of a specific relief organization," says Brodbeck. "While some non-profits do not work with 'Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers,' other groups specialize in working with these volunteers and are often only limited in the amount of work they can do by the number of tools available at the site."

ToolBank USA launched ToolBank Disaster Services to deploy a mobile version of a ToolBank to provide tools at the direct location of greatest need. The mobile unit would not only require a way to track the tools real-time during a crisis, but also zero downtime in the reservation system. "If you are working at a bricks-and-mortar ToolBank and there is a system delay, staff can work

through the issues,” says Brodbeck. “However, if we are in a crisis situation with 100 volunteers literally staring you in the face as they wait to get tools, it is mission-critical that the system is up and responsive 100 percent of the time.”

Datapipe made a commitment to provide comprehensive managed services, including hosting, for ToolBank USA’s new tool reservation and tracking platform, Remedy, developed by The UPS Foundation in partnership with Home Depot, Stanley and Black & Decker. ToolBank USA’s team had never used Remedy before, so Datapipe’s engineers worked to explain the architecture and review server specifications, while walking the ToolBank team through the steps of getting it set up. “Datapipe took their time to make sure we had what we needed before we even knew what we needed,” Brodbeck says.

OPERATIONAL IMPACT

RESULTS & BENEFITS

- Enabled 100% uptime for nationwide tool reservation and tracking platform
- Gained deeper business insight with hosted data analysis tool
- Gained reliable and consistent systems support for mobile disaster recovery unit
- Reduced the user of water, materials and waste sent to landfills

The services provided by Datapipe transformed the way ToolBank USA operated, and the level of service available to the community. “We now have real-time inventory of all of our tools. The system is updated every time a tool is requested, checked out, or returned,” Brodbeck says. “Any staff member can see that we currently have eight of our ten saws out in the field with five being returned tomorrow so we can meet the request for seven saws the following day.”

Because of the new software and the always-on reliability of Datapipe’s managed services, ToolBank USA was able to open its second location in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2011. After a successful opening and the efficiency of the tracking software, ToolBank USA has since opened two additional locations in Baltimore and Cincinnati. Five more locations are opening in the near future in Chicago, Richmond, Phoenix, Portland and Houston.

Because of the confidence the Datapipe services provided at the brick and mortar locations, ToolBank USA launched its first mobile disaster recovery unit in 2014. The ToolBank Disaster Services unit is stocked with tools specifically needed during disasters and uses the same tool reservation system as the traditional locations. A UPS tractor transports the unit directly to the affected

area as soon as it is safe, and volunteers in the area have access to the tools they need to begin the critical rebuilding process. ToolBank develops relationships with many of first-responder charity organizations before disaster strikes, which allows best results for the community in need.

ToolBank Disaster Services staff accesses the tool tracking platform using three Datapipe servers. “We have enterprise level support that is fully scalable, but also can scale to triple digit replication,” says Brodbeck. “We use the same platform in our mobile unit that we use in our traditional ToolBanks and expect to be using the same infrastructure when we have 1,000 locations.”

“The superior connectivity and service provided by Datapipe at our traditional locations gave us the confidence to pursue the mobile unit, which has a time-sensitive aspect to it,” Brodbeck says. “If we had only access to service with dial-up speed and 90 percent reliability, we never would have been able to provide this crucial service to the disaster management community.”

On April 27, 2014 several tornados, including one rated E4, hit Conway, Arkansas. The tornados destroyed or damaged over 400 homes in the area and took the lives of 16 people. After the situation was carefully assessed, Team Rubicon requested the ToolBank Disaster Services mobile unit to be delivered to the area. Team Rubicon was founded by two Marines after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams.

For the next four weeks, ToolBank staff loaned tools from its Home Depot parking lot location, providing 1,939 volunteers with \$50,837 to help clear the debris from the storm and repair structures. Team Rubicon was responsible for all volunteer management after the storms. Thousands of unaffiliated volunteers showed up in Conway ready to help; Team Rubicon was able to put them to work using the tools available in the TDS mobile unit. Without the ability to use the volunteers effectively, cleanup in the area would have been much slower and more expensive for the county and its residents. In addition to Team Rubicon, ToolBank Disaster Services worked with All Hands, Chasing 4 Life and the Arkansas Dream Center.

Based on the overwhelmingly positive response from the disaster community and the success of the first deployment in Conway, ToolBank USA is working rapidly on a second mobile unit. “We are scaling the project to be regional so that the unit is already deployed near disaster-prone areas,” says Brodbeck.

“ToolBank USA and its affiliates have had three-and-a-half wonderful years with Datapipe, and it is critical to our business to be able to strengthen that relationship with a renewal of their services,” Brodbeck says. “Datapipe is always on and always up, and they provide the best reliability and customer service.”

DATAPIPE

A next generation MSP, Datapipe is recognized as the pioneer of managed services for public cloud platforms. Datapipe has unique expertise in architecting, migrating, managing and securing public cloud, private cloud, hybrid IT and traditional IT. The world's most trusted brands partner with Datapipe to optimize mission-critical and day-to-day enterprise IT operations, enabling them to transform, innovate, and scale. Backed by a global team of experienced professionals and world-class interconnected data centers, Datapipe provides comprehensive cloud, compliance, security, governance, automation and DevOps solutions. Gartner named Datapipe a leader in the Magic Quadrant for Cloud-Enabled Managed Hosting.

DATAPIPE.COM US: +1 877 773 3306 UK: +44 800 634 3414 HK: +852 3521 0215