Final Report on IBM's Contribution to Chilean Earthquake Relief

April 5, 2010
Santiago, Chile
Executive Summary

In February, 2010, a massive earthquake devastated much of Chile. In the immediate aftermath, IBM’s Crisis Management Team began working to assist IBM’s employees, clients and local communities. IBM partnered with the Red Cross, using information technology to help with its overall recovery efforts.

IBM worked with the Red Cross to create a Smarter Command Center. The solutions IBM deployed as part of the Smarter Command Center helped the Red Cross become more efficient in its search for missing persons, delivery of information to the public, and coordination of its logistics, budgets and volunteer efforts.

“Faced with disaster situations, like those lived by our country in the last days, the need for information becomes imperative. With this Smart Center, we can significantly reduce response times for the persons that search, and optimize volunteer work.”

-- Lorenza Donoso, President of the Chilean Red Cross

The Crisis

The earthquake that hit Chile on Saturday, 27 February 2010 was centered in Cobquecura, a southern Chilean town approximately 300 miles from Santiago. In Santiago, the damage was somewhat limited. The quake affected mostly older buildings, and cut electricity, water and phone services in many areas. The earthquake also set off tsunami warnings for coastal nations throughout the Pacific Ocean basin.

The most consequential damage occurred in the cities of Concepción, Talca, Parral and Constitución. Many people in those cities were left homeless or had to be evacuated. A lack of food led to massive looting of supermarkets and retail stores. Police intensified surveillance and took steps to maintain order, including implementing a curfew in Concepcion, where some of the worst looting occurred. It’s estimated that seventy percent of Chile’s economy was affected by the earthquake, with particular damage to the fruit and mining sectors.
IBM’s Response

The IBM Crisis Management Team convened in Chile to assess options for assisting with recovery and outreach. The local IBM Chile team worked with IBM’s Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs team to develop a strategy and respond to the clients, employees and communities who were looking to IBM for leadership.

IBM Chile decided to work with the Chilean Red Cross to provide an implementation of Sahana that would help with recovery efforts and with finding missing persons. Sahana is a free and open source disaster management system, owned by the Sahana Software Foundation, that uses web-based collaboration tools to address the coordination issues that occur most commonly in disaster relief efforts.

As part of the strategy, the IBM Chile team also launched a campaign to gather cash donations from IBMers that would be delivered through the Chilean Red Cross.

A Smarter Command Center

The project determined to be of most value to the Chilean Red Cross was to have IBM build a "Smarter Command Center." Using the Sahana platform, IBM deployed collaborative tools that improved communication between the various systems used by Red Cross workers.

The Smarter Command Center helped the Red Cross’s overall operations become faster and more efficient. The Red Cross was able to quickly acquire internal information, receive and search missing person requests, and deliver information out to the general public. Their logistics – things like managing stock, budgets, delivery, and reporting – were improved through better coordination and communication. And the Red Cross can now manage its database of volunteers more efficiently, which will improve response times for future disasters.

IBM’s Smarter Command Center solution included the following technology donations and services:

- Lotus Live software licensed for 50 people, for a period of four years
- Lotus Symphony Suite implementation
- Training for Red Cross personnel on resource usage
- Two xSeries 3650 servers
- 15 Notebook PCs with security cables
- Three flat panel LCD 42” television screens to complement information delivered by the press
- Cabling for power, data and telephone
- WiFi capability
- UPS allowing 2 minutes of operation. (Generator system is activated in 60 to 90 seconds, manually).
- Renovating the Red Cross basement into a Command Center
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