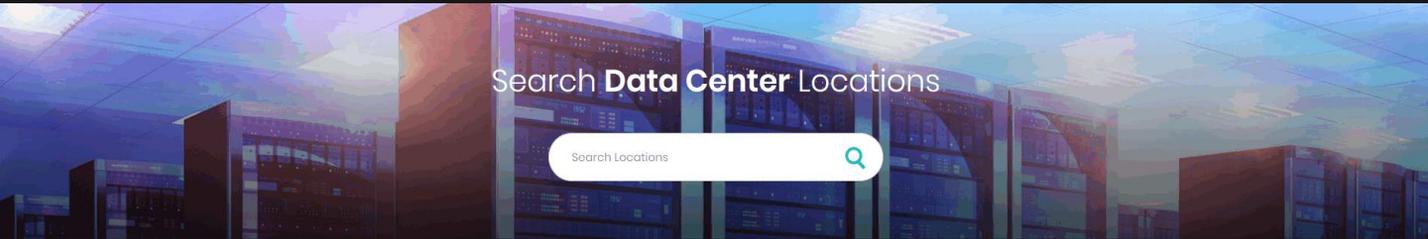


Building Datacenters.com - the largest marketplace for buyers and sellers of IT services



2X

adoption by colocation and disaster recovery service providers since launch

270+

providers with over 1600 global data centers and more than 300 products

15%

compound monthly growth rate in website traffic

Datacenters.com Case Study

Disrupting the market for data center services

"We're charting a new frontier for this industry. There's so much uncertainty, and you never know exactly what people are going to want. ... To make it a success, you have to have the right people on your team. After working with ShakaCode, I can say for sure that I have the right people on my team to help solve the really tough problems. They do everything on time and within budget to give us the best chance for success."

Joel St. Germain, Founder and CEO of GCG and Datacenters.com



DATACENTERS.COM

Datacenters.com is the largest supplier of curated data center services and colocation facilities in the indirect sales channel. Datacenter specialists help companies find colocation space and disaster recovery services across the globe.

HIGHLIGHTS

CHALLENGES

- Replace antiquated website with limited functionality and SEO capabilities
- Create a two-sided marketplace that's fast and attractive to accelerate the adoption of providers and consumers
- Develop a platform that can evolve over time to be a one-stop-shop for all IT resources

SOLUTION

- **Technology:** Brand new ReasonML front-end, Ruby on Rails backend, and React on Rails for Server-Side Rendering.
- **Team:** ShakaCode developers backed by HawaiiChee.com source code and team, including Justin Gordon, the creator of React on Rails.

RESULTS

- 2X the number of colocation space and disaster recovery service providers since launch
- 270+ providers with 1600+ data centers around the world
- Over 300 unique products available for one-click purchase
- 15% compound monthly growth rate in site traffic

Challenge: Disrupt the market by centralizing the acquisition and management of IT resources

"It was back in the early 2000s that Joel St. Germain, the founder and CEO of [Global Communications Group \(GCG\)](#), identified the need for an easy way for clients to find a colocation partner to meet their data center needs," explains Mike Price, VP of Software Engineering at GCG and [Datacenters.com](#).

Founded in 2002, GCG is a leading business technology consulting firm and solution provider headquartered in Englewood, Colorado. GCG leverages technology to help clients solve business challenges and create competitive differentiation via a set of services including app engineering, ERP implementation, Internet of Things (IoT), cybersecurity, enterprise cloud, and data center solutions. GCG and Datacenters.com are strategic partners offering high-density colocation, enterprise cloud, managed services, and connectivity solutions.

"Colocation was taking off in 2011," continues Mike, "but there was nowhere to research different data centers and their offerings. To fill the gap, GCG put together a team and created the very first [directory of data centers](#) around the world. Although initially quite basic, it served its purpose as a research tool and generated [leads](#) for GCG's agents and the data center providers that had signed up."

Expanding the vision

"However, over time the industry evolved and, along with it, the needs of our users," states Mike. "Although there had been many iterations of Datacenters.com, it wasn't meeting the needs of either GCG or our clients. GCG needed to expand their vision and deliver a consolidated platform where users could manage all of their IT infrastructure in one place."

Datacenters.com set out to create a [modern colocation and managed services marketplace](#) with each user empowered to manage their own experience. The existing content management system couldn't scale and required redevelopment as a web application in line with the new business model. But more was involved.

"We didn't just want a marketplace limited to colocation and managed services," explains Joel. "We wanted to create a sophisticated platform that could evolve to meet all the IT needs of our clients. It needed in-depth insights and access to expertise that would help clients make the best choice for their business. We wanted to create a unique, disruptive marketplace that allows you to research, find, and purchase any IT solutions or services."

Process: Finding a partner with experience in developing a digital marketplace

“Our goals were ambitious and extremely aggressive, but we didn’t want to hire additional headcount since our needs change from month to month,” explains Mike. “After considering about ten different software development houses, we contracted a team to work on Ruby on Rails and React. However, we soon found out that there were certain issues they were unable to resolve.”

The development team was using the [React-on-Rails gem](#) developed by [ShakaCode](#) and hosted in GitHub. However, they were unable to implement server-side rendering correctly to get to the level Mike was looking for from a design standpoint.

“The team had been struggling for a month and were still unable to get it right,” says Mike. “It was affecting our SEO. We needed to quickly find a way to render our pages properly so Google could consume the information to increase our rankings and traffic. To get the job done, we decided to contact ShakaCode as the creators of React-on-Rails.”

Excelling on initial tasks

After finding ShakaCode on GitHub and reviewing their open source contributions, the development team reached out to Justin Gordon, the CEO and Founder of ShakaCode and [HawaiiChee.com](#).

“We typically give a new development team a small, well-defined task to see how we work together,” explains Mike, “before increasing the scope and forging a long-term relationship. We brought ShakaCode in to sort out the server-side rendering. It took five or six weeks to complete, but we quickly discovered that, as a company, they had so much more to offer.”



The old datacenters.com website

Innovating to accelerate disruption

"While our goal was to create a marketplace, by the fall of 2018 Datacenters.com was still just a registry," states Joel. "We needed to increase our rankings to accelerate both provider and consumer adoption by developing a beautiful website with good performance and great user experience. Once we got to know that ShakaCode could do both the design and development to the standard we were looking for, we engaged them to lead the process of creating the marketplace while the original team worked on other tasks."

ShakaCode's experience in building marketplaces along with their competitive pricing, transparent billing, and flexible resource allocation gave Mike the confidence he needed to hand over the majority of the work to the team. ShakaCode was hired to improve the way the site was structured, fix the legacy code that wasn't working correctly, and build a brand new front-end for the two-sided marketplace with IT providers the "sellers" and consumers the "buyers" of IT services.

"ShakaCode's experience in building their own HawaiiChee.com marketplace definitely helped," adds Mike. "Creating a highly-visual website with a consistent user experience is critical to its success. Your developers must know the best way to provide a fast, easy, and consistent experience for managing text, images, and video. ShakaCode's experience with HawaiiChee.com using React and ReasonML definitely helped shape the success of the project."



"We hired ShakaCode to help us fix a lot of legacy code from the previous developers that wasn't working right, but they ended up doing so much more. They helped us create a much better development flow that we've rolled out across all our projects and is still in use today. It's working really, really well for us."

Mike Price, VP of Software Engineering for GCG
and Datacenters.com

Project: Increasing value and raising levels

"With the right team on board, by September 2018 we were ready to invest heavily and ramp up our efforts," states Joel. "ShakaCode was quick to scale up the team to meet critical milestones before a hard deadline ahead of an important trade show in early spring 2019."

Under pressure to deliver a single-pane-of-glass that would allow providers to manage their inventory and consumers to research unbiased reviews and purchase and manage IT services, the team got down to work.

"ShakaCode's designer added a massive amount of value to the process," reflects Mike thoughtfully, "and the level of coding went up several notches compared to what we had before. That allowed us to accomplish much more within a shorter time frame. It was an enormous undertaking, but now we were no longer limited by a lack of talent. For the first time, we actually believed that we could turn our vision into reality!"

Implementing best practices for accelerated results

“One of the things that had the biggest impact was the way ShakaCode managed the project,” shared Mike. “Everything was super-transparent, which, because we’re extremely cost-conscious, was important to us. Everyone tracks their time by task. That made it easier to predict how long it would take and how much it would cost to develop new features.”

ShakaCode’s commitment to best practices ensures that automated test procedures are put in place, all code is peer-reviewed, and each task carefully tracked with detailed reports provided to clients every week. The process ensures that milestones are met, budget adhered to, and issues promptly addressed. With that information at his fingertips, Mike found it easier to manage the project on behalf of Datacenters.com from a milestone and budget perspective.

“It’s a real asset to have ShakaCode’s team spread across multiple time zones,” states Mike. “It’s almost like the project is ticking along 24x7. Every morning when I get up, there’s something new waiting for me to check or sign off. I don’t get involved in everything, but when you’re running a project with aggressive deadlines, it’s a real comfort to know that while you’re sleeping, the project is still forging ahead.”

“We’ve always met or exceeded our timelines, and have a great cadence right now. We’re just humming along. Meeting our milestones is something that I don’t have to worry about.”

Mike Price, VP of Software Engineering for GCG and Datacenters.com

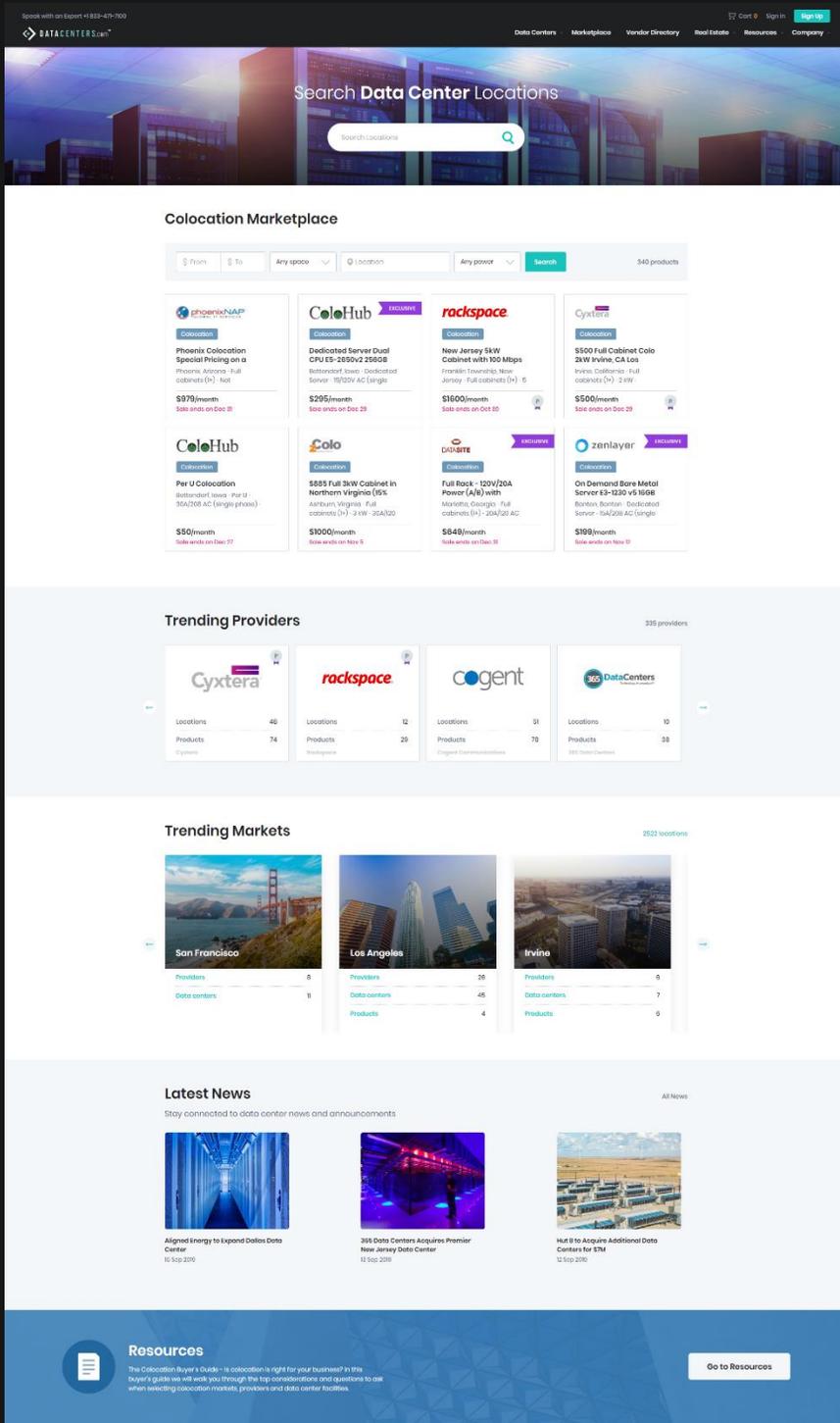
Knowledge sharing to drive innovation

“When it comes to development,” adds Mike, “the team at ShakaCode have vast experience, and they’re not afraid to share it. They helped me make the critical decision as to whether to stick with the combination of Ruby on Rails and React, or to only use Rails. They convinced me to stick with React and switch to ReasonML for type-safety to build a very interactive, real-time web app that’s secure. They’ve been proven to be right. We’ve been able to build really cool stuff with those tools.”

The ShakaCode team also helped Mike work through framework decisions. These included choosing between Flow, TypeScript, and ReasonML for type-safety with React code, and the use of GraphQL to develop APIs instead of using RESTful API.

“The ShakaCode team are experts when it comes to understanding technology and the best way to put it together,” states Mike. “They never pushed us into making specific decisions from a technology standpoint, but they have clear opinions on the best way to use certain technologies. During the project, I came to value those opinions. It’s enabled us to improve our internal process and enhanced the way we develop apps.”

The result?

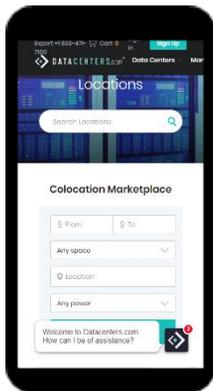


Results: An innovative first backed by great code

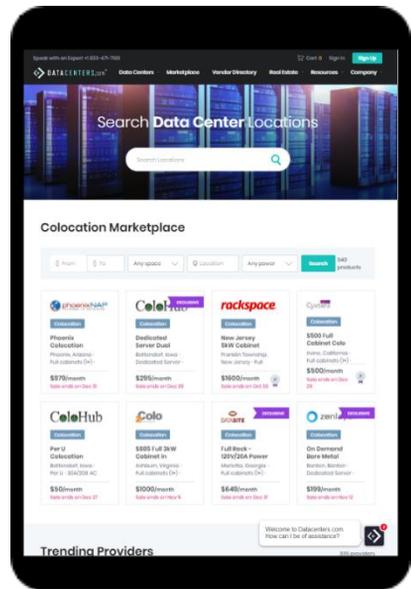
“We now have a marketplace that’s a first in the industry,” states Joel. “It’s evolved into the easiest and coolest way to research data centers. We’ve redesigned the entire site with a brand new directory, a [real estate section](#) that we never had before, and an improved look for our [blog](#). Our initial vision for the site is finally a reality. We’ve gone from chasing the vision to a whole new world where we can explore creative ideas and scale the business.”

From a design and functionality standpoint, the marketplace exceeded the team’s goals. Rapid adoption from more than 270 colocation and disaster recovery providers quickly resulted in 1600 global datacenters with over 300 products being available on the marketplace—three times the amount they originally anticipated!

“From a technology standpoint,” expands Mike, “our code is much easier to maintain. It was difficult to get other teams to focus on developing a really good test suite. With ShakaCode, it was different. It’s part of their culture. They don’t just develop great code. They also make sure it’s easy to test and upgrade.”



Datacenters.com includes a user friendly UI for use across all mobile devices



Building for future innovation

“The current marketplace is just the beginning,” explains Joel thoughtfully. “We’re going to build out the platform to be the go-to place for managing your entire enterprise IT infrastructure. We’re building more features every day. A user will be able to log in, acquire IT infrastructure from multiple providers, and spin up and manage services directly from within Datacenters.com. You’ll get a global view of your IT infrastructure, with detailed insights into exactly what you have and how much you’re paying for each service! That’ll be a first for the industry! No one else is even close to doing that.”

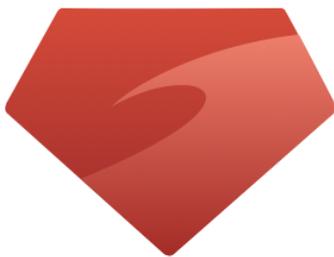
And the prospect of a future relationship with ShakaCode?

“If I have my way, ShakaCode will definitely be a part of the journey,” states Mike emphatically. “Building the Datacenters.com marketplace has been the proving ground for working together. We’re not going to stop now! We’re already working on the next phase and anticipate the relationship to be a lasting one. I’m relying on it!”

“I would rate ShakaCode 9½ out of 10. There’s always room for improvement, but they’re exceptionally good at what they do. They’re great communicators. They love the technologies they build on, and they’re passionate about coding. I trust them. I trust their opinion. I love these guys. I wouldn’t want to live without them.”

Mike Price, VP of Software Engineering for GCG and Datacenters.com

Would you like to transform your
business and disrupt your industry
with a new marketplace?



ShakaCode
makes it happen!

Email us at contact@shakacode.com
for a free consultation.