

# Session Spotlight: Connecting the Cloud, Data Centers and Your Footprint

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How green are clouds?

The answer to that question has been as difficult to pin down as the origin of cyberspace itself. That is, until now! As reliance on cloud computing services continues to grow, the once intangible concept has manifested as data centers - physical storage facilities for our virtual information. Today, we know that a cloud is only as "green" as its data center, but efforts to quantify the physical impact of our virtual actions has revealed that our understanding of the operations and efficiency of these centers is cloudy at best (pun intended).

Want a behind-the-scenes look at the secretive world of the cloud? Still think I'm talking about the big, white, fluffy things in the sky? If so, the session, "[Connecting the Cloud, Data Centers and Your Footprint](#)" at USGBC's [Greenbuild Conference and Expo](#) is for you.

The session will feature three sustainability experts: Andrew Blum, author of *Tubes: A Journey Into the Center of the Internet*, Christina Page, Global Director of Yahoo!'s Energy and Sustainability Strategy; and Joshua Hatch, Director of Sustainability Analytics at Brightworth. Together, they'll set the record straight on the realities of data centers – the innovations, concerns, trends, and planetary impacts.

Here's a sneak peek from the session's speakers:

## **What's the topical focus of [your](#) session?**

**Joshua Hatch:** In less than two decades, data centers have become an essential and fast-growing part of our lives. Few of us understand the environmental footprint of these ubiquitous – but often hidden – engines of our virtual lives. This session gives you access to data center experts who will pull back the curtain on the hidden infrastructure of our online lives. They will bring you up to speed on the environmental impacts of your actions in the cloud...and show you how the cloud can help to reduce your impact on the material world.

## **What makes you an expert in this area?**

**Andrew Blum:** I am a contributing editor to Metropolis Magazine, a correspondent for WIRED, and a consulting editor at UrbanOmnibus. My first book, *Tubes: A Journey Into the Center of the Internet*, was published earlier this year.

**Christina Page:** I am responsible for shaping Yahoo's corporate strategy for energy and sustainability, with a focus upon continuously improving the environmental practices in our data centers. Prior to joining Yahoo!, I was at Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), where I advised clients such as Shell, Coca-Cola, Wal-Mart, and PG&E on corporate sustainability strategy and energy efficiency opportunities. I have undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies from Brown University and a Masters in Environmental Management from the Yale School of the Environment.

**JH:** I have led the sustainability strategy for 10 enterprise data centers and many more phased or co-location data centers totaling over 2.5 million square feet. At Brightworks, I am currently working with Facebook on the design of its data centers throughout the world. My academic training prepared me well for this work. At Cornell University in New York, I completed a BS in Biological and Environmental Engineering. Then, at Stanford University in California, I completed a MS in Atmospheric & Environmental Engineering, and a PhD in Environmental Engineering. During my time at Stanford, I was a member of the Stanford University Environmental Engineering Society.

**Why is the topic of your session important?**

**CP:** Data centers and the cloud represent a fast-growing and little-understood field. In order to better inform their decision-making, engaged environmental professionals need to understand key issues related to making the data center industry and the cloud more efficient and sustainable, as well as the impact of cloud services on our everyday lives.

**Why should Greenbuild attendees attend YOUR session specifically?**

**AB:** This is a very rare opportunity for environmental leaders to speak directly to experts on the environmental footprint of the cloud.

**What's the most interesting experience you've had in the green building/sustainability world?**

**JH:** I am currently working on the design of energy efficient data centers throughout the world for Facebook and other clients. These projects are by far the most interesting, challenging, provocative, and exciting. Facebook's data centers are 50% more energy-efficient than what is allowed in the building code and over 30% more energy-efficient than what is considered "best practice" in the data center sector. Yet Facebook's data centers cost 20% less than other data centers. This challenges the conventional wisdom that greater energy efficiency (and better overall building performance) comes with a higher price tag. Having the world's most efficient data centers didn't require more money, it required better ideas.

**What's the most interesting non-green building related fact about yourself?**

**CP:** I spent 5 years volunteering with Mountain Rescue Aspen, assisting lost and injured hikers & skiers in the mountains of Colorado.

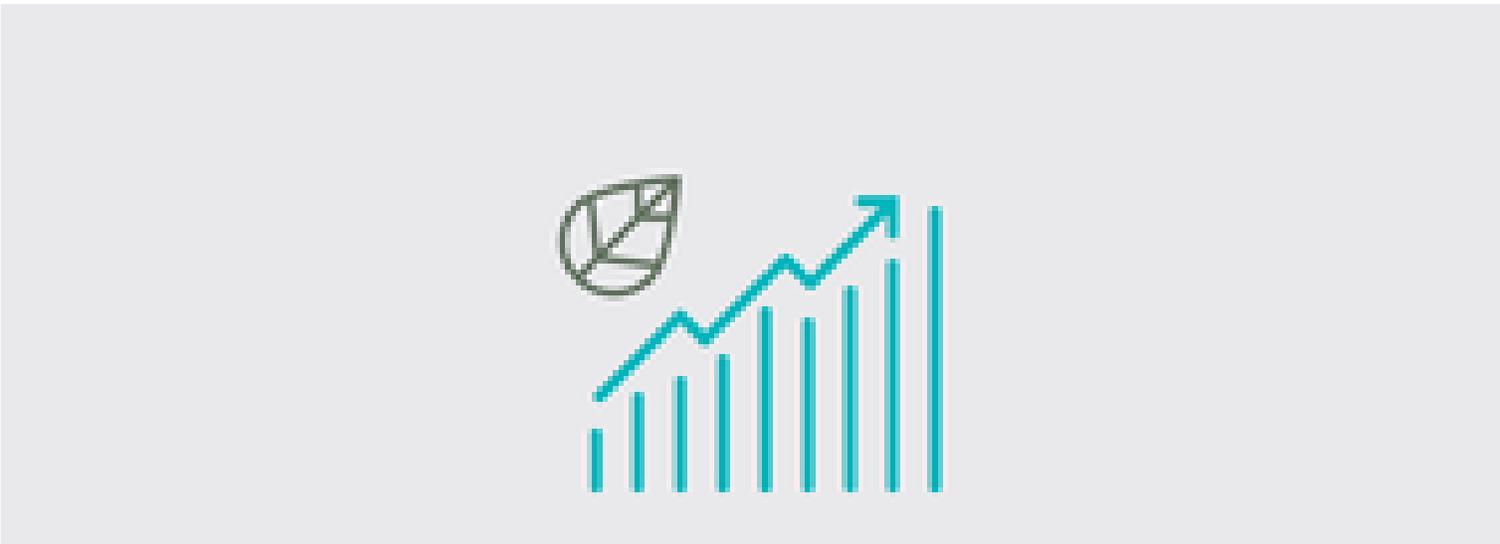
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