



Backup and Recovery is Easy, Finding the Right Vendor Isn't



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Sometimes the toughest thing about backup and recovery isn't the planning and setup. It's finding the right vendor to provide it. Any IT provider hoping to profit from selling disaster recovery as a service (DRaaS) needs a customizable solution and a solid foundation of support along with steel-hardy software that can make their jobs easy. For some, finding all of those things at once can take some trial and error.

James Moore is the manager of managed services at Total Computer Solutions, a North Carolina-based MSP hybrid that provides IT services to the Greensboro area and beyond. As James steered TCS toward an MSP-only model, he had to think carefully about which vendors he'd work with and which products he'd sell because their profits—not to mention their clients' satisfaction—depend on it. In particular, James knew they'd need someone reliable to provide backup and disaster recovery solutions they could resell to clients.

As many IT providers will tell you, backup and disaster recovery is not only essential to any small business, it can also be quite profitable if done correctly. For TCS, selling DRaaS meant selling clients a backup and disaster recovery (BDR) appliance along with offsite backups stored in the cloud for extra protection.

"When we first got into BDRs, we were selling Zenith Infotech," says James. Before Zenith Infotech closed their doors in 2014, they were one of a handful of alliance partners that use pieces of the StorageCraft® Recovery Solution as the backup and recovery software for their BDR hardware. Since Zenith was closing and therefore suspending support on their devices, TCS had to look into new solutions, though they retained an affinity for StorageCraft.

After trying a few other BDRs from various vendors, James found that pre-built ones just weren't right for TCS. According to him, it's easy to buy one that's pre-made, but they don't allow for the customization of hardware and configuration they would've gotten by using StorageCraft software on hardware they custom-built. Not only that, but James found times when vendor support was more frustrating than helpful.

"We dallied around with [BDRs] from a local computer vendor and they do well until they don't, then it's not as easy to troubleshoot or get replacement parts—it's kind of a hassle. We started finding that some vendors' replacement policies are odd. If there's a bad hard drive, they won't replace the hard drive, they want to replace the whole thing. So then we have to ship back an entire BDR," he says.

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**- James Moore, Manager of Managed Services,
Total Computer Solutions**

After a few bad experiences, they knew taking charge of their own hardware was the solution. "We decided we were going to build our own BDRs and bring it all in-house. We found out that having more control over the hardware and how the software is configured just made more sense to us." Plus, having used StorageCraft in BDRs provided by various OEM partners, James was confident in the software. "We liked the product, liked what it could do," he says.

By using their own custom hardware along with StorageCraft Recovery Solutions on the software end, TCS was able to build BDRs with quality hardware and the ability to not only store backups, but the power to spin up those backups as virtual machines using StorageCraft VirtualBoot™.

With onsite hardware and backups handled, TCS still had one more layer of protection to consider: offsite backups. Similar to their experience with finding the right BDR solution, finding the right vendor for backup and recovery in the cloud proved a bit challenging. Initially, TCS turned to a new cloud vendor.

“So here comes [a new vendor] with a price that looks too good to be true,” says James, “But I think [they] took on more than they could handle and we had huge problems getting drives offsite and getting them seeded. There was a big delay between when we sent the drive off and when it would be copied.”

Delays like these can affect recovery point objectives (RPOs) and make it impossible to get back all the data you need. For TCS, delays were unacceptable. “We have a goal of making sure data offsite is at least 90 percent current on any given day, but when we moved to [the new vendor] I remember on a good day it was 85 percent and often substantially lower than that. There were times we were trying to get things offsite and some of our BDRs just never got offsite for various reasons—bandwidth, seeding hard drives—we’d send hard drives to get seeded and they couldn’t read them so they’d delete the data on the hard drive and send it back—it was extremely aggravating,” says James.

For James, it seemed the technology just wasn’t up to the task.

“Their copy technology appears to just be a file sync so if there’s ten days from the time we seed to the time it goes up—that’s ten days’ worth of incremental backups that don’t copy. Their file sync is great for what it is, but when we’re ten days behind, we’d never get caught up unless a client had massive bandwidth. And they didn’t really have an answer—they had no real solution because it was just the way the software worked,” he says.

Given the struggles they had with this vendor, James decided to try replicating client backups to StorageCraft Cloud Services™ using StorageCraft ImageManager™. James was impressed.

“From a technical standpoint, it was awesome. It was just more dependable and it was easier to see at a glance how things were going on a per-server level. If I have a BDR out there backing up four servers, I’d be able to see that all but one of the servers are up to date; I can look in ImageManager or on the server and see what’s going on,” he says.

Currently, James uses the cloud for offsite backup storage, but plans on adding instant virtualization in the cloud as a profitable addition to their service offering for clients who can’t afford much downtime. Now TCS has a few different service levels they can provide various clients so there’s an offsite option that fits anyone. As James says,

“Because it’s a small price difference between the basic storage and the price for virtualization, we’re going to be able to offer them an offsite disaster recovery option. Now we’ve got a profitable value-add for our portfolio that we didn’t have at [our previous vendor].”

As noted, sometimes the software isn’t the only thing that makes a vendor great. More often than not, it’s the people that make the biggest difference.

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**- James Moore, Manager of Managed Services,
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"I've never had any problems working with anyone at StorageCraft. They have a good crew of good people. They're easy to work with and they're extremely helpful. Our sales guys have been great giving us guidance and feedback. Everybody we've talked to has just been awesome."

To conclude, there are certainly reasons why buying a pre-built BDR makes sense (we cover these in our [Build vs. Buy guide](#)). But having the knowledge to customize BDR units for any size of client can give you more flexibility, higher quality hardware, and more favorable margins. Not only that, but staying flexible means clients can have everything from basic onsite backup, all the way to local and cloud virtualization. With StorageCraft Recovery Solutions, you can deliver a custom offering to clients with any needs and budget, and even make some substantial profits while you're at it.

Take a look at our guide [How to Build a StorageCraft BDR](#) to learn what you need to know to build one yourself.

About Total Computer Solutions

Based in Greensboro, N.C., TCS has been providing technology solutions for businesses since 1990, meeting their needs for today and providing flexibility and scalability for the future. With a full range of IT expertise, a reputation for speedy response and a track record of success, TCS is your proven, go-to partner for turnkey IT solutions.

www.tcsusa.com/



About StorageCraft

StorageCraft Technology Corporation develops best-in-class business continuity software and services for physical, virtual, and hybrid environments running on Windows and Linux systems. StorageCraft's award-winning solutions for backup, disaster recovery, system migration, data protection, and cloud services, help you and your clients recover every time, everywhere, from any disaster.

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