A New Formula for BDR Reliability

How Advanced Backup Solutions Partners

Deliver Value on the Front Lines
Advanced Backup Solutions (ABS) is a leading provider of data backup and disaster recovery services to organizations that are serious about business continuity. When they’re called on to recommend replacement solutions, the business stakes are always high. ABS partners cover a wide range of vertical markets and business sizes from SMB to enterprise, but they all have at least one attribute in common: end clients that count on them daily to keep their businesses moving with proven IT solutions.

Since 2005, ABS has made a name for themselves by enabling IT service providers to automate advanced data protection measures for their customers while providing enterprise-level reliability, scalability and cost efficiency. Where StorageCraft® enters the story is by delivering the backup and disaster recovery technology that ABS uses in their trusted Continuity Appliance. This is how ABS attracted industry-leading service partners like IT4 in Medford, MA and Second Star Technologies in Bakersfield, CA.

IT4

IT4’s relationship with ABS began indirectly when a company called Zenith Infotech unexpectedly closed their doors. A large number of IT4 clients were running Zenith Infotech’s backup and recovery solution based on technology licensed from StorageCraft. IT4 President Alex Tarani says this left them in a tough spot. “We were having great success,” he says. “It was easy to sell, extremely affordable, and yielded fabulous margins. The end of Zenith sent a lot of people in the industry scrambling to find a solution.”

To protect their clients, IT4 says they initially looked to a Boston-area backup vendor for help—let’s call them “The Other Guys”. Although they didn’t offer a managed services program at the time, The Other Guys assured IT4 that their product would mirror the Zenith Infotech solution that had been running on StorageCraft ShadowProtect®. IT4 was excited about the partnership and quickly enrolled 30 clients in the new program, which involved IT4 buying the box and then licensing the backup software from the vendor. But because this vendor required IT4 to purchase a cookie-cutter appliance, they were limited in terms of hardware configurations and recovery capabilities, on top of pricing concerns.

The Other Guys just weren’t cutting it as a replacement for Zenith. “With Zenith Infotech and StorageCraft, we could put most clients in a 1TB or 2TB NAS for a $1,000 - $2,000 setup fee and a recurring revenue schedule of anywhere from $100 to $400 a month depending on their data needs. It worked!” But when IT4 started working with The Other Guys, the prices started to climb.

If an IT4 client was backing up 600GB to 1TB, Alex explained that The Other Guys recommended a 9TB NAS at around $5,000 - $6,000. The price point didn’t fit IT4’s model, so the vendor proposed MSP pricing that included hardware and software. IT4 ended up putting clients in 13TB - 19TB boxes to back up 1TB of data and they were filling up in 6 to 12 weeks. The vendor suggested archiving the older data at an additional cost. “We were afraid to approach clients with extra fees as high as $299 to $499 a month,” Alex said. “They just weren’t right for us.”
Given the price issues and the data compression problem, IT4 wasn’t feeling satisfied and by now backups were failing and it was becoming a full-time job to move and manage data from boxes that could no longer handle the jobs.

Alex explains, “Because their technology hinged on deduplication, we could run for just a few months on a 9TB box from the new vendor and it would fill up. It wasn’t working, but most of our clients were locked into 3 year agreements with time left.” To top it off, IT4 had to install multiple agents for each protected machine. The solution from The Other Guys required separate agents for bare-metal backup and file-level backup; a needless complication and a real time waster.

Luckily, it was about this time that IT4 engaged a new client who was using ABS for backup and they arranged an introduction to Andy Cote, Director of Channel Sales at ABS. Alex speaks warmly about his company’s experience with ABS.

“Andy Cote and his team at ABS set up a demo for us, featuring the underlying StorageCraft technology that we already knew and believed in. They delivered a product that performs exactly as promised. We no longer worry about failed backups or any loss of client data. We know it’s performing well and earning client confidence. Andy understood the challenge we faced with time left on so many service agreements and worked with us to make the situation manageable for everyone.”

So far, IT4 reports that they’ve moved 20 clients over to the ABS/StorageCraft solution. Alex says, “ABS made the transition completely seamless and transparent for our customers. Margins are back where they should be and we can put our clients in a 1TB or 2TB box that lasts a long time. It’s a wonderful relationship. Now we have the confidence to start selling this solution to new clients and we highly recommend it. Backup and disaster recovery services are a great way to start a managed services conversation with new prospects and it’s a tremendous source of recurring revenue.”

Second Star

Although Second Star Technologies in Bakersfield, CA partnered with The Other Guys, just like IT4, they made the transition to ABS and StorageCraft for different reasons and on a different timeline. In fact, they have parallel installations with both solutions in some of the markets they serve, but Second Star reports that ABS and StorageCraft are frequently the end customer’s choice for both cost and performance when they bid them side by side.

Founded by Brandon Phipps in 2011, Second Star Technologies is a managed services provider focused on strategic IT management for small and medium businesses in oil and gas, financial services, and commercial and residential construction.
Brandon explains that part of Second Star’s backup and disaster recovery story has to do with how the company started. “My wife and I began doing PC repair and virus removal for home users as a way to earn extra Christmas money. We were both working full time for another tech company, but when they shut down unexpectedly, we suddenly inherited a lot of their former small business customers. Before the end of our first year we had migrated over to managed IT services and saw explosive growth.”

As their business took off, Brandon noticed that there was a huge gap in their market for a managed backup and disaster recovery solution. Brandon says, “We had come from a traditional break/fix IT shop and dealt with a lot of expensive and cumbersome tape systems where the media was unreliable and prone to failure. We started shopping around for something better and hit two solutions simultaneously.”

One solution was The Other Guys, who showed up frequently in an online IT admin forum where Brandon and his wife were active. The other was ABS and StorageCraft, who came their way through industry event connections and random contacts in their professional network. Brandon says, “We made an early full court press with the Boston vendor and got certified with them for level one tech and sales support.”

Brandon estimates that for a typical installation in the vertical markets served by Second Star, ABS and StorageCraft represent about a $5000 solution by the time you factor in a new server, operating system and a year of initial cloud services. He says, “Identical service with [The Other Guys] could cost my customers 3 or 4 times as much, not counting maintenance and renewals. From a financial perspective, I’d rather give up some money on the initial sale and keep a happy customer on a progressive product for recurring income. Beyond that, when a $15,000 to $20,000 solution tanks severely, which happens fairly often, that’s costly to replace and restore. ABS and StorageCraft keep my customers rolling.”

And because business needs change, it can be tough to stick with the pre-packaged hardware configurations provided by The Other Guys. For Brandon, flexibility is key. “One clear advantage is the flexible hardware configuration. What we’ll do is build a brand new Dell server in house with ShadowProtect installed, swap out the domain controller, throw you on cloud backup for a couple days, refresh the old server for $200 and you end up with a near equivalent to the other guy’s $20,000 solution. ABS and StorageCraft allow us to succeed in ways The Other guys can’t.” he says.

Brandon also notes that what matters most to him is doing everything he can to avoid any disruptions to his customer’s business. He says, “ABS and StorageCraft make that very, very easy to do and their implementation has been phenomenal. [The Other Guy’s] process doesn’t allow them to do that in a business-friendly time frame. The customer has to keep rolling. By the time I become aware of an issue, ABS support is already on top of it. My customers have come to expect perfection.”

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- Brandon Phipps, Founder, Second Star Technologies
Bringing It All Together

As Director of Channel Sales for ABS, Andy Cote hears a lot of success stories like the ones shared by Alex Tarani and Brandon Phipps. He sees himself (and all of his ABS colleagues) as a vital extension of the technology teams at IT4 and Second Star, enabling them to deliver immediate value and complete business continuity to their end customers. Toward the end of our conversations with Alex and Brandon, Andy said, “Working with professionals like IT4 and Second Star is incredibly rewarding. The integrity and passion they bring to their work make it obvious that they care deeply about the success of their end customers. We want to do all we can to promote the vital services they offer and help them to ramp and retain as much new business as possible.”

About Advanced Backup Solutions

ABS was founded in 2005 with a mission to provide partners with the most advanced, enterprise-class solutions available for true business continuity. ABS serves the public sector, education, healthcare, financial, legal, food and beverage and other enterprise level industries with the highest standards of integrity, continuous improvement and customer service. Their corporate offices are in Beverly, Massachusetts, with data centers in Massachusetts and California.

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About StorageCraft

StorageCraft® provides best-in-class business continuity solutions for IT environments. StorageCraft delivers backup, disaster recovery, system migration, data protection, and cloud services to keep businesses running, no matter what.

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