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- Founded: 1999

*Storage solution proves its value and becomes the foundation for MSP McLane Intelligent Solutions' sales strategy.*

## ZENITH BDR TURNS SKEPTIC INTO BELIEVER

There was a time when talk of an affordable, all-in-one, data backup and recovery solution would have been dismissed as pie in the sky. Skip Carruth, president of McLane Intelligent Solutions, recalls it as a sort of IT "Holy Grail," something that was talked about but nobody knew whether it really existed.

Then things changed in 2008. Having heard from IT channel peers about Zenith Infotech's Backup and Disaster Recovery (BDR) solution, Carruth decided to look into it. He set out to debunk the myth once and for all. At least, that's what he thought.

"We found that it really worked," Carruth recalls. "We'd heard about Zenith for awhile. We'd heard about the BDR, and it seemed absolutely impossible that somebody could do such a thing."

Nevertheless, Temple, TX-based McLane bought a demo unit, tested it, and all of a sudden, a window opened into a whole new world of business possibilities and opportunities. Carruth couldn't have been happier. Until then a system that handled data storage, backup, and recovery was virtually unattainable for small

and midsize businesses that lack the big pockets of their enterprise counterparts. "It was available elsewhere but it was very expensive," Carruth recalls.

### New sales strategy

The Zenith Infotech BDR became the foundation for McLane's sales strategy. Already a managed services provider, McLane saw the BDR as a perfect complement to offerings for its existing clients as well as an entry into new clients.

The company often leads with the BDR when wooing a prospect. While occasionally prospective customers already have a storage, backup, and recovery strategy with which they are happy, for the most part Carruth says the BDR solution is the perfect way to get the foot in the door.

The company's strategy revolves around assessing customer needs by asking questions about their plans to deal with disaster situations. Once clients understand what they would gain with the BDR, the relationship takes off from there. "We don't try to sell ourselves. Instead we try to get clients to understand what they are lacking," says Carruth. "Oftentimes, it just starts the conversation."

As far as Carruth is concerned, there isn't a business he can think of that couldn't make good use of the BDR solution. "Every business that needs to ensure its on-site systems are backed up, secure, and enabled for rapid recovery needs a product or service like our BDR offering," he says.

The BDR performs automated backups every 15 minutes to virtual servers, giving businesses the ability to recover deleted and corrupted files throughout the workday. That, says Carruth, "brings incredible peace of mind to the business owners."

McLane's client base consists primarily of professional services, automotive, manufacturing, and health-care organizations. The ideal client for McLane, according to Carruth, is "a business that is dependent on technology, sees IT as an investment, is innovative and forward-thinking, and wants a business partner to provide IT services akin to a virtual CIO, rather than 'a computer guy.'"

The 15-person company was fortunate to ride out the recent recession painlessly for a couple of reasons — location and strategy. "Forbes rated Austin-Round Rock, which is 45 minutes south of us, the best-poised city



in America for recession recovery," Carruth says. "In addition, our experience has been that businesses need top-notch professional services from a quality IT provider, and the economy has not changed that need."

McLane, like many other IT channel companies, started out as a break/fix shop, operating under a revenue model highly susceptible to economic fluctuations. The company went into business in 1999 under a different name and got its first managed services client in 2004, the same year it was acquired by McLane Advanced Technologies. In 2010, it was spun off under the parent company, McLane Group. The company is owned by Drayton McLane Jr., who also owns the Houston Astros baseball team.

Having gotten into managed services early, McLane Intelligent Solutions was prepared for the recession, which forced countless businesses to pull back on capital investments. But while they did so, they kept paying for high-value ongoing IT services because the success of their operations depended on the services.

#### Pioneering spirit

As a managed services pioneer, McLane recognized the same spirit in Zenith Infotech when deciding to

partner with the vendor. "Zenith is a pioneering organization," says Carruth. "They brought enterprise back-up and disaster recovery solutions to a market that could never afford such solutions in the past. They were first to market, and everyone has been playing catch-up since."

So, when Zenith Infotech embarked on the development of its private cloud solution — SmartStyle —

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McLane took notice. SmartStyle is an all-in-one private cloud with thin clients, virtual servers, and built-in storage and Business Continuity. McLane tested an evaluation unit of the MirrorCloud add-on to SmartStyle and recently received a production unit that it plans to use as a launchpad for cloud services.

"We're taking it through its paces right now," says Carruth. Once

McLane's technical staff is comfortable with the technology, the company plans to start marketing it aggressively to customers.

Carruth sees cloud services not only as an opportunity, but also an "absolute necessity" as the company looks ahead. "Whether we provide public or private clouds and whether or not we provide a hybrid model with conventional servers, every business of every size in the world will be impacted by the transition to the cloud," he says. "We must identify the opportunities to leverage the cloud to bring value to our clients."

#### Long-term partner

McLane Intelligent Solutions had sales of about \$1.6 million in 2010, a 20% increase from the previous year. In 2011, the MSP is aiming for growth of 35%, which would bring its revenue to \$2.16 million.

As the company looks ahead, McLane will continue to rely on Zenith Infotech to support its strategic efforts. Partnering with Zenith, says Carruth, has produced stellar results. Among them was the launch of a hardware-as-a-service (HaaS) offering that McLane built around the BDR. "Our HaaS practice has grown 83% in seven months, and we would never have achieved that without optimizing our methods on the Zenith BDR," says Carruth.

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#### Taking Stock: Expert Exchange With itSynergy

Thursday, April 14, 2011 – 12:30 P.M. ET

When a company's leader says he's ready to walk away from his business if he can't finally find his stride after 14 years, there's obviously a problem. That was the state of things for itSynergy President and Founder Michael Cocanower in this latest installment of *Expert Exchange*. Can Arlin Sorensen, CEO of HTG Peer Groups, help Michael regain enthusiasm for his profession? During their time together in Phoenix, AZ, Arlin will assess itSynergy's strengths and weaknesses as the two men collaborate on a plan for seeing the company accomplish its business goals, and gain a long-term competitive advantage. Listen in as Arlin and Michael talk over the strong values already in place at itSynergy — with emphasis on ethics and shared success, teamwork and trust — and consider how adherence to those principles contribute to business vitality. You won't want to miss this MSPtv program as Arlin then outlines specific steps such as finding a market identity, adjusting leadership style and ultimately recasting the organization to take on future challenges and opportunities.