



DATA BACKUP
CHOOSING AN ONLINE BACKUP PROVIDER
FOR YOUR IT BUSINESS

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INTRODUCTION

Data backup is a fundamental service offered by IT resellers and managed service providers. Online backup is a cost effective way for IT service providers to offer their SMB clients a secure data backup solution

MSPs need to consider a few core elements when choosing an online backup provider: secure solution, white label software, IT management and reporting tools, a reseller program that includes technical and sales training, and U.S.-based customer support. IT service providers should chose an online backup provider not based on how much the solution costs, but how much profit they will be able to resell that solution for.

Online Backup Is Integral to IT Services

Any IT professional will tell you that offsite backup—whether as a standalone backup system or used in combination with a local device or hosted solution—is an imperative piece of the business continuity puzzle. All businesses, no matter their size, need to store their most valuable asset—their data—in a secure, remote location.

As an IT service provider, choosing an online backup vendor to partner with is a critical decision for your company and for your clients. There are many offsite backup options available, but most are either flimsy consumer grade products or enterprise-level solutions that are too intensive and far exceed the budgets of your SMB clients.

Not only do managed service providers need to find a secure and reliable offsite backup solution for their clients, your provider also has to have a reseller program that allows you to easily manage and profit from their solution.

Finding that right combination of software and reseller program might seem like a tall order, but there are several elements you should look for that will satisfy both your technical and your business requisites.

Security

The most elemental requirement IT managed service providers need to look for is security. If your clients' data isn't secure, it renders all the other features and functionalities moot. First of all, make sure that your provider writes your data to multiple datacenters. Storing your data offsite insures it; having it stored in two different datacenters located thousands of

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miles apart guarantees that you'll be able to get your data back when you need to, regardless of any natural or human generated disaster.

Secondly, make sure that your provider has security certifications. SAS 70 is the industry's gold standard. A SAS 70 certification means that an independent third party auditor has verified that provider has the proper controls and protocols in place. Some of these controls include verifying the physical security of the data centers, proper privacy of customer data, and the stability of the provider's business itself.

Another security certification your provider should have is HIPAA compliance. This certification is absolutely necessary if a managed service provider has medical, dental, or other health care oriented clients.

Lastly, be sure that your online backup provider utilizes proper encryption both in transit and while in storage. Look for providers that have both SSL encryption and 256-bit AES encryption. That's the same level of security that's used for online banking and in the military.

Restoration

The whole point of offsite backup is to be able to restore your clients' files when they need them. Many IT providers have run into problems when trying to restore files with cheap, consumer grade online backup. Restoration capabilities truly set apart the winners and the losers in the online backup reseller market.

The best online backup providers provide different methods of restoration: over the Internet, via a local device, or through portable media. Online recovery is convenient for individual files or folders, or for clients who do not have strict recovery time objectives.

In addition, an online backup vendor who also has the ability to overnight a hard drive to you allows you to provide an increased level of service to your clients who do have strict recovery time objectives for critical data, such as those in the legal or medical fields.

Local Backup

Still another option is to provide local backup and restore in addition to the pure online backup solution. With local backup, you can backup your non-critical data to a local device while parsing out the critical data to be stored in data centers. This hybrid solution allows IT service providers to create an individualized solution for each of their clients based on their needs.

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Other Software Features

Some other software features to look for in your online backup provider are:

- Support for both SQL and Exchange
- Ability to perform an initial seed
- Block-level backup
- Continuous data protection
- Mapped drive support

Management Tools For Resellers

It's not only important that your online backup software works well for your clients; it has to work well for managed service providers as well. And having great software is only part of the equation. As an IT reseller, it's critically important that you can easily install, manage, and track your clients' online backup solution. That's why many consumer backup solutions—even those solutions that claim to have reseller programs—aren't very effective.

You need a data backup solution that is specifically for VARs, managed service providers, and other IT resellers. One way to gauge if your online backup provider truly speaks your language is to evaluate their management tools.

It is critical that your online backup provider has detailed, organized reporting functionality. For example, a management portal that allows you to not only manage your backup sets, but provide clarity into your costs, profits, and client billing is critical to your experience with the software and can determine the success or failure of the backup solution as a whole.

Another critical element to look for is integrations with your remote monitoring and management (RMM) and professional services automation (PSA) tools. Being able to incorporate your backup service into your preexisting management tools just makes your entire management process smoother and less of a hassle.

Backup Reporting Tools

In addition, a backup status report that allows technicians to manage their backup sets more efficiently by providing a snapshot of important details is critical to data management. For example, notifications such as "backup failed," "backup canceled," "backup missed," or "you

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had four errors” are very helpful in determining a) if there is a problem, and b) how to solve it.

This may seem like a small feature in comparison with security requirements, features like these that are reseller-centric will allow you to scale your business (and make more profits) to a much greater degree.

Beyond the actual reports, being able to set your own conditions for backup failure or success allows IT service providers the flexibility to shape the software to fit your policies instead of the other way around.

Reseller Program

Perhaps the most critical component of choosing an online backup provider is the robustness of their reseller program. Some managed service providers commoditize their business by trying to be the cheapest. Others think that great software with all the bells and whistles will help them sell a premium service. Neither is the key to reseller success.

The best way to ensure that online backup is profitable for your IT business is threefold: secure software, at a reasonable price, that you can sell. It’s the sales component where your online backup provider’s reseller program will have the most impact.

Rebranding

By offering a white label solution, your remote backup provider will allow you to make an impact on your bottom line right away. Some online backup companies such as Intronis will format everything from the software, to an end-user website to marketing and sales collateral—all with your brand. An online backup vendor who provides you with all the tools to resell their solution truly understands that their success is dependent on your success. These companies will make selling online backup as easy as possible for IT resellers.

Training

With some online backup providers, the conversation ends as soon as they have your credit card number. Look for a reseller program that provides training and enablement sessions. That way, a managed service provider will not only have a better understanding of the software and how to sell it, but they will ramp up and make a profit faster too.

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Support

When installing and managing new software, any IT provider is going to have questions. That's why having access to top-notch support is critical to your own business. Many software companies outsource their technical support to an overseas call center. This support may be okay for basic questions, but more often than not, you're going to need someone who speaks your language to solve your issues quickly and efficiently. It's rare to find, but try to partner with a provider whose support is entirely U.S.-based, like Intronis.

Furthermore, if your online backup provider is the proprietary software owner, your support is going to be more thorough and robust because they built the product from the ground up. They will truly understand their software's functionality inside and out.

Pricing Structure

Although it may not be immediately obvious, the pricing structure of your online backup solution is also an important factor to consider. For example, some vendors may appear to have a low per GB cost, but when you add up all the startup and licensing fees, that per GB charge doesn't tell you the whole story.

Look for a provider with a flat per GB rate, that way you can easily calculate what you can resell the solution for to your end users. Plus, charging licensing fees is counter-intuitive: IT service providers shouldn't be penalized for growing their businesses, i.e., adding more servers and desktops. You want to partner with a provider who encourages your growth, not inhibits it.

Choose Your Online Backup Provider Wisely

As a managed service provider, providing secure backup and reliable restoration is a foundational piece of your IT business. Investigate your options critically. Be sure that your provider fulfills the three core elements of secure and reliable software, easy-to-use management and reporting tools, and a top-notch reseller program from rebrandable software, to training to U.S.-based support.

With those three components in place, IT resellers will be well on their way to adding recurring revenue to their businesses with online backup.

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