



Avnet Helps Data Strategy Take New Business Development to the Next Level

Background

Data Strategy is a full-service turnkey provider of comprehensive technology solutions designed to solve specific business problems. In addition to providing expertise in a wide range of industry leading hardware and software products, Data Strategy mobilizes its engineering and project management resources to assess, implement, integrate and support each client's unique IT environment. Data Strategy is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Opportunity

Today's business environment demands that companies develop and maintain IT systems capable of keeping pace with a wide range of rapidly evolving business requirements. However, trying to match that pace by simply adding more physical hardware—requiring additional power, backups, cooling and space—comes at a high cost, both in real dollars and operating efficiency.

Gregg DeWitt, President of Data Strategy, calls this efficiency-killing malady, “server sprawl,” and believes his company offers the antidote: virtualization.

Virtualization is a technology that makes it possible to run multiple operating systems and applications on the same system at the same time. In 2004, Data Strategy signed on as an early reseller of VMware, the product of a California-based company of the same name that pioneered virtualization technology. “We found VMware and focused our strategy on becoming experts in the world of virtualization,” said DeWitt. “That product, along with our professional services, has fueled our growth.” VMware also drives Data Strategy's server business—IBM Blade Center, IBM System x and IBM System p—and its sales of IBM storage products.

Leveraging its specialization in virtualization Data Strategy works primarily with large SMB and enterprise-level clients throughout the upper Midwest to assess their server and application environment, gauge system utilization and re-architect their data center. “The result is an optimized data center, condensed to a much smaller number of servers, with those servers being utilized much more efficiently at a much lower cost,” said DeWitt.

The Partnership Approach

Founded in 2003, Data Strategy lacked the resources and expertise to execute major marketing campaigns and special events early on. The company's approach to new business development consisted of the traditional “feet-on-the-street” method, interspersed with a few small-scale group presentations.

Avnet, however, has been very proactive in encouraging the company to capitalize on the growing market for VMware—specifically an emerging technology that allows companies to host certain PC applications on a server in a virtual environment, rather than on desktop. Thus was born the “Virtualization Road Show,” a large-scale event targeting Data Strategy customers and prospects throughout Michigan.

“Avnet took a lead role in funding, planning and organizing the event; they helped us secure speakers and drive attendance,” said DeWitt. “And one of Avnet's marketing directors was heavily involved in helping us coordinate logistics—everything from setting agendas and selecting a site.”

The Results

According to DeWitt, the one-day event held in October 2007 generated a half-dozen highly qualified leads, one of which is ready to close. “This event was of a different scale for us. We had almost 100 people in the room,” he said. “We've got another one scheduled for next year, along with a few smaller, more intimate events throughout the year. We couldn't do it without Avnet.”

While Avnet has been Data Strategy's distribution partner since the company's inception, the partnership is still a young one. DeWitt looks forward to leveraging it more in the future. “We're still new to the game; we're still discovering all the Avnet programs available to us,” he said. “But even at this stage, they are invaluable at helping us do what we need to do to drive our business.”



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