



Business challenge

As a new entrant into the competitive managed cloud services marketplace, VSS needed to make its mark fast. What technology should the provider choose to ensure it would exceed client SLAs?

Transformation

VSS chose a niche where they could put their expertise to best use. With a combined solution of IBM software-defined storage and IBM® Power Systems™ solutions, it created a new suite of differentiating cloud services. VSS brings further value as advisors on which workloads to move to cloud, and when best to do so.



Bryan Lopez
Senior Development
Executive, VSS

Business benefits

84%

possible savings for clients compared to traditional in-house IT environments

50%

potential OPEX savings for clients on tier 1 storage costs offers a competitive edge

40%

possible reduction in data protection costs—and huge peace of mind!

VSS

Bursts onto the scene with cloud services that customers cannot pass up

VSS specializes in offering its customers technology solutions that drive better business results, building teams of experts to implement and support that technology, and delivering on its promises to clients and industry partners. A long-established value-added reseller, VSS has recently evolved its business to include cloud-based managed services.

“IBM software-defined storage is a game-changer for cloud services: it allows you to quickly and easily allocate the right resources to each workload.”

—Bryan Lopez, Senior Development Executive, VSS

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Entering the fray

Cloud computing is a hot topic on everyone's minds, and more companies are taking the plunge into unknown waters in a bid to cut IT costs, simplify infrastructure and increase flexibility. Alongside any large opportunity comes equally large-scale competition, as an increasing number of providers emerge seeking their own share of a growing market.

VSS is one of these recent entrants into the cloud services sphere. Originally a value-added reseller, the technology specialists began exploring the possibility of expanding its offering. Bryan Lopez, Senior Development Executive at VSS, notes: "We became increasingly aware that the cloud services industry was where most of the opportunity could be found, so moving into this market was a natural transition for us. With so many players making the same decision, it was vital that we launch a portfolio of cloud services that would stand out from the crowd."



A veteran player in addressing clients' specific needs and developing tailored solutions, VSS decided to play to its strengths.

"We weren't looking to compete with the huge commodity cloud service providers; rather, for a niche where we could put our expertise to best use," says Lopez. "Many companies don't know where to start when it comes to managed services, so our aim was to become an advisor that helps them decide which workloads to move to the cloud, and when."

"Without fail, customers know they want 100 percent uptime and great performance. Our challenge was in selecting the right technology foundation that would enable us to offer this at appealing prices."

Tooling up for success

VSS chose to deploy IBM Storage, IBM Spectrum Storage™ software, and Supermicro solutions to support its new hybrid cloud managed services offerings. Using software-defined storage technology from IBM, the company can take advantage of policy-based provisioning and management of data storage independent of the underlying hardware.

"A client came to us looking for a better way to back-up their storage environment. Using IBM Spectrum Protect, we were able to realize a 40 percent cost reduction on backups for them in the first year."

—Bryan Lopez, Senior Development Executive, VSS

"Without a competitive cost per terabyte of storage, we could not offer competitive and financially attractive prices to our clients, so the storage decision was absolutely crucial," recalls Lopez. "The IBM solution provided the low total cost of ownership we were looking for, alongside exceptional functionality, allowing us to offer extremely competitive 50 percent OPEX savings on tier one storage costs to our clients. Combine that with the IBM expertise we already had in-house and the choice was an easy one."

In just one month, VSS was able to execute a business model shift by launching its storage managed services offering based on IBM XIV® systems, successfully diversifying its business and enabling access to a whole new part of the marketplace. The service is aimed at clients that want enterprise-level storage capabilities but do not wish to invest in having the skills to manage them in-house. Lopez explains: "The ease of deployment of the IBM solutions enabled us to get up and running in just a month, reducing time-to-value for our new cloud services strategy."

Next, the company introduced its VSS PowerCloud hosting services, aimed at companies that rely on IBM Power Systems servers running IBM i, IBM AIX® and Linux operating systems. PowerCloud is based on IBM Power System S824 servers with IBM POWER8® architecture.

For IBM i workloads within its PowerCloud offering, VSS relies on IBM Storwize® V7000 and its built-in IBM Easy Tier® function, which automatically moves the most frequently-accessed data to the fastest drives for ongoing optimization of the storage environment. To simplify management and help clients maximize use of resources, VSS utilizes IBM Spectrum Virtualize™ as a hypervisor layer. IBM AIX, Linux and VMware workloads are assigned to VSS's hyper-converged solution based on IBM Spectrum Accelerate™ or, where solid-state drive storage is required, IBM Storwize V7000, allowing VSS to optimize service levels for a range of clients.

"IBM software-defined storage is a real game-changer for the cloud services industry because it allows you to very quickly and easily allocate the right sort of resources to each workload," comments Lopez. "Not every client is going to want super-fast flash storage for their entire environment. Supported by IBM solutions, we can tune our offering to deliver just the right balance of price and performance, without letting internal administration get out of control."

VSS did not stop there, launching backup and disaster recovery cloud services based on IBM Spectrum Accelerate in its hosting center on purpose-built Supermicro appliances, mirrored with XIV systems in its Data Center, and with IBM Spectrum Protect™. Lopez adds: "By outsourcing their backup and recovery services to us, customers get peace of mind at a flat fee per month. We also use the same environment to support our own disaster recovery plan, giving us control over our service continuity."



Riding the wave

The cost-efficiency of the IBM solutions plays a key role in ensuring VSS can compete in a crowded marketplace.

"The hardware savings and simple management combined with the cost-effective portable licensing models offer us savings we can pass on to our customers," explains Lopez. "In fact, the IBM solutions contribute to the 84 percent savings clients can realize by adopting our managed services compared to traditional IT

environments. The 50 percent OPEX savings on tier one storage costs made possible by the IBM solutions also gives us a competitive edge— attracting new clients and inspiring loyalty among our existing customer base."

"IBM technology consistently delivers the high performance and availability that ensure we meet our SLAs and exceed client expectations. For example, we are able to achieve an average of 1,000 IOPs per spindle on a typical workload."

—Bryan Lopez, Senior Development Executive, VSS

Lopez provides a specific client example: “A client came to us looking for a better way to back up their storage environment. They had one storage administrator managing 65 TB of data. Using IBM Spectrum Protect, we were able to realize a 40 percent cost reduction for them on backups in the first year. Even better, their storage administrator was freed from worrying about backups, allowing him to be more productive to deliver even greater value to the company.”

Supporting exceptional service continuity alongside simple management, IBM solutions help to keep VSS’ client satisfaction high.

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“IBM solutions contribute to the 84 percent saving clients can realize through adopting our managed services compared to traditional IT environments.”

—Bryan Lopez, Senior Development Executive, VSS

Lopez. “For example, we are able to achieve an average of 1,000 IOPs per spindle on a typical workload. Since we started offering cloud services approximately 18 months ago, we have enjoyed extremely high availability courtesy of the IBM solutions.

And crucially, the management and scaling of resources is simple enough that we can offer this quality of service at very competitive prices.”

With its successful entry into the managed cloud services industry, VSS is seeing its revenue and client numbers grow.

Lopez elaborates: “Choosing IBM Storage and IBM Spectrum Storage solutions to support our transition from a value-added reseller into a cloud-based managed services provider has proven to be the right decision, helping us continue to extend our market share and portfolio of services.”

Solution components

IBM® Spectrum Accelerate™
IBM Spectrum Protect™
IBM Spectrum Virtualize™
IBM Storwize® V7000
IBM XIV®
IBM Power System S824
IBM AIX®
IBM i
Linux

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Take the next step

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