

Kovarus

Date: January, 2008

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Abstract: IT is looking for solution providers to integrate technologies by offering strong services, deep technology knowledge and even deeper understanding of the customer's business processes. Kovarus partners with best of breed technology vendors to provide an impressive portfolio of data management and storage system solutions, delivered with a professional services framework.

Kovarus and its Customers

Nearly four years ago, Kovarus opened its doors to offer customers knowledge transfer and functionality for data management solutions and storage systems. The company saw a need for multi-vendor support when it came to data management assessment, design, architecture and deployment within multi-vendor environments. Today, Kovarus is filling this gap for its customers—and growing based on results.

Kovarus is putting the needs of its customers in front of its own in some respects. For example, vendors typically have a systems engineer (SE) to sales/customer support ratio in the 1.3:1 range. Kovarus is at 1:1, placing the investment in customer demand ahead of cost. ESG believes this is a great tactical move, and will prove strategic if Kovarus continues to grow its business at the current rate. The risk is if business slows down, Kovarus's SE utilization rates will drop, which can be an expensive proposition. The bet is that the incremental technical value Kovarus brings to customers will more than justify the risk.

Kovarus systems engineers are cross-trained, so they know how things work—and why. They are certified with companies like Cisco, VMware and EMC, making them both a Velocity Certified Partner and part of the EMC Authorized Services Network (ASN). These are significant financial and time commitments, but they understand the value it brings to customers.

EMC Transforms with Kovarus

As a company, EMC has transformed from a channel indifferent culture (not just the company, but the culture), to one that thinks about the channel proactively. EMC sought out partners like Kovarus to provide data management and storage solutions and services to integrate technologies in multi-vendor environments. Solution providers that are cross-trained and certified with a storage systems focus have the ability to provide unique value add to IT thanks to data management education and experience obtained from heterogeneous accounts in the customer base.

Some solution providers, like Kovarus, have the capability to integrate and test solutions prior to deploying them at the customer site, giving the client an opportunity to go into production earlier with a more stable solution. This will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the business. With regard to virtualization, VMware currently has first mover advantage. However, recent ESG research shows that 69% of future virtualization technology adopters plan to evaluate Microsoft's offering, as compared to 59% saying they plan to evaluate VMware's technology (see Figure 1).¹ Kovarus must have expertise in both solutions in order to guide IT in the right direction and handle integration appropriately.

¹ ESG Research Report: *The Impact of Virtual Servers on Storage*, 2007

Application Focus Helps Customers Deploy

When it comes to virtualization and its effect on storage systems, IT must analyze existing backup, recovery and disaster recovery processes. ESG virtualization research² shows that of all data management functions, 61% of the respondents were most interested in utilizing backup and restore data management capabilities with their virtual server environment (see Figure 2). In the same survey, 37% of the respondents said the amount of backup data has increased since deploying server virtualization. Kovarus's virtualization practice enables customers to maximize efficiency and protect data in a virtualized environment while planning for the future.

FIGURE 1. CURRENT USERS' VIRTUAL SERVER STORAGE MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2007

Plantronics Inc. Validation

Great solution providers deliver unique value to their clients. They can discuss competing vendor technology, but are able to work with end-users to determine the best solution based upon specific criteria best suited for each individual customer. ESG spoke with representatives from Plantronics Inc. in order to understand the value Kovarus added to their pending virtualized environment and the effect on their networking, data management and storage systems environments.

Early in the process, Plantronics had to decide whether to educate themselves about architecting a virtualized storage environment, or work with a solution provider to obtain the expertise. Rick Guzman, Manager of Systems Administration, said they selected the latter. They choose Kovarus based upon their services qualifications to create an architectural plan to enable initial deployment and planned growth for their IT environment.

Kovarus enabled the quantification of server utilization rates and the effect on power and cooling, which were key concerns for Plantronics. In addition, the architectural design plan enabled development teams to establish the system controls required for enhanced productivity, which had positive business impact for Plantronics. The value provided by the services deliverable also aided in internal service level requests from a provisioning perspective—once again enhancing internal client satisfaction levels.

² ESG Research Report: *The Impact of Virtual Servers on Storage*, 2007

The Bottom Line

For small companies, solution providers are an extension of IT. For larger IT environments, solution providers are relied on for their specific expertise. During our review of Kovarus, ESG heard things like, “We got from 0-60 mph in no time leveraging the experience and expertise of Kovarus.” ESG is always looking for solution providers that offer business and operational impact for customers, and Kovarus did just that with companies like Plantronics. It would have been nice to actually see the financial impact as well, but there were no before and after numbers to analyze at the time.

Kovarus is leveraging its training and certification investments for the benefit of its customers. This is what IT should demand from the solution provider community as these organizations are becoming more integral to the decision making process due to the complexity of existing solutions.