Integrating Cloud Backups Into Your MSP Management Platforms

How to Generate Low-Risk Incremental Revenue with Online Backup Services

In a world of tight margins and noisy clients, the smart MSP knows that automation is the only way to profitability. That's why successful providers use Remote Monitoring Management (RMM) and Professional Services Automation (PSA) solutions to greatly automate client activities. These platforms – with names like **Autotask**, **ConnectWise**, **Kaseya**, **Level Platforms**, and **N-able,** among others – have become mission-critical for the efficient delivery of client IT services.

Those same clients today are only now beginning to appreciate the operational benefits in offloading backup and recovery activities as well. Handing over data protection to a trusted MSP transfers risk while at the same time eliminates a labor-intensive activity. MSPs considering a data protection offering, however, must tread carefully. Building the solution poorly can cause recovery failures – *and very unhappy clients*.

That's why smart MSPs have learned to integrate offsite backup services into their existing RMM and PSA platforms. The right technology simply "snaps" into your existing solution. The cloud provides everything else.

To the Cloud! Parlaying Existing Comfort

Even the term "cloud" today still generates a visceral reaction with many people. Some IT professionals see cloud as an insecure option in a world of constant threats. Others believe cloud to be a loss of control, a ceding of responsibility to a nameless, faceless datacenter that they'll never be allowed to enter.

While cloud in the general sense still seeks a widespread embrace, *the MSP relationship is uniquely different*. You likely have already implemented an RMM and/or PSA solution for automating the work order tracking, monitoring, remote support, project management, and billing functions for clients. Such solutions by design exist in two places at once: One half exists inside each client's facility; the other exists in yours.

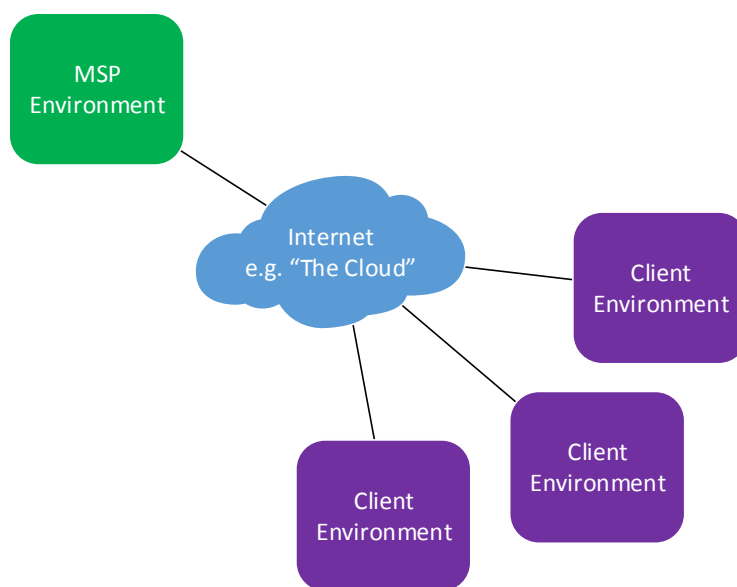Connecting the two is the cloud itself.

Figure 1: MSP as Cloud Service

As a result, *the MSP's relationship with its customers is already a cloud service relationship* (Figure 1). Your technicians manage client equipment via remote connections. They troubleshoot problems, apply fixes, provision software, and deploy updates via remote tools. In many cases, your client request system itself is delivered as a remote solution, with clients documenting requests into a service that – for them – exists in the cloud. The result is a kind of cloud comfort and history of success not often seen in the traditional IT-to-user relationship.

Your MSP is already a cloud service. Parlaying that comfort into new offerings like **Cloud Backup and Recovery** is likely to be an easy upsell. But, how best might an MSP operationalize such a service? Build it yourself, or resell someone else's? For lowest-risk incremental revenue, the argument for reselling data protection services is one worth reading.

The Argument for Reselling Data Protection Services: Economies of Scale, Automation, and Risk Reduction

Every MSP knows that there is no greater relationship killer than a bad backup. Your customers expect the world from you. They expect your services to be an improvement over those they can accomplish

themselves. They demand reliability, greater efficiency, and the specialized experience that meets their needs.

All this they demand at a cost that's less than doing the work themselves.

Being successful in a world of tight margins makes automation a critical part of the MSP's recipe for success. Being successful also means knowing when to build a new offering's infrastructure yourself *and when to resell the services of others*. When it comes to Cloud Backup and Recovery, the latter of these is often the smarter option. Three important arguments dictate why:

Argument #1: Economies of Scale Require Scale

Cloud services work as a business model when customer needs are aggregated beneath a unified solution. The cloud by definition is intended to be an "always on" service. That requirement mandates guaranteed uptime in combination with incredible resiliency, both of which require massive up-front expenditures before services can ever go live.

Cloud Backup and Recovery services are one example of these requirements to the extreme. Protected data must be protected against the variety of all possible failures. Redundancies in systems, storage, and networking must be designed to ensure that client data is never lost.

Accomplishing this yourself can be an overwhelming task without a massive customer base, deeply experienced talent, and the focus of a single mission. When it comes to Cloud Backup and Recovery, *one must scale to enjoy economies of scale*.

Argument #2: Profitability Requires Complete Automation

RMM and PSA solutions are designed to work side-by-side with client on-premise hardware. Each platform uses its own approach in doing the job, but virtually all of them require some process of establishing a remote session in order to run client processes.

Backups have been a requirement for long enough that virtually every business has its own solution. Often, your job as MSP involves managing that backup solution, ensuring its successful capture of backup data, and troubleshooting any issues that arise.

These client-specific solutions define the antithesis of automation. Each client backup solution can be different, with each requiring a new set of maintenance activities. Those differences create inefficiencies, which directly impact your bottom line.

A Cloud Backup and Recovery offering, on the other hand, offers to streamline the data protection activity entirely. Figure 2 shows a graphical representation of the relationship between client, MSP, and cloud backup provider.
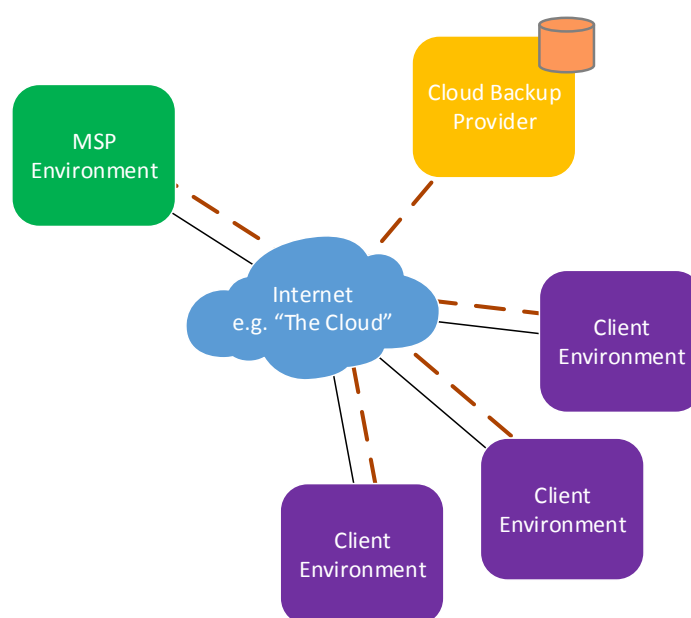

Figure 2: Integrating RMM/PSA with a Cloud Backup Provider

In this configuration, the traditional activities in client management continue to be performed by the MSP's RMM and PSA platform. Integrated into that platform are the necessary automation and client-side agents to capture and transfer backups to the cloud provider. Restores are similarly supported by reversing the flow of information from provider back to client.

Argument #3: Risk Reduction Requires Risk Transfer

Data protection can be a wildly risky offering to build on your own. Data must be protected at rest, in transit, and even during processing. Protected data must be archived with multiple copies to prevent any loss from creating a client impact.

Most importantly, and most difficult of all, data protection services must be constantly available, easy to use, self-service capable, and guaranteed by service levels that exceed anything clients can accomplish themselves. Anything less could mean recovery failures, unhappy clients, and an expensive solution that might no longer be trusted.

Data Protection: Snap-In and Profit

It is for these and other reasons why smart MSPs have learned to integrate provider-hosted backup services into existing RMM and PSA platforms. Successful integrations drive incremental revenue for always-on services best left to data protection experts. With platforms like **Autotask**, **ConnectWise**, **Kaseya**, **Level Platforms**, and **N-able** available, the right data protection technology will simply "snap" into the platform you're already using.

The cloud provides everything else.

About Intronis

Intronis Cloud Backup and Recovery is a world-class cloud backup solution for the IT channel. Intronis provides the industry's easiest to use secure data solution for offsite and local backup, which generates a monthly recurring revenue stream to add to your business. Intronis offers the best, deepest Exchange and SQL backup on the market, U.S.-based customer support, and is also integrated to major solutions in the MSP ecosystem. The solution has been field tested by thousands of MSPs and the industry spoke by awarding Intronis the 2011 Vendor of the Year from ASCII. Visit www.intronis.com for more information.