

MSP Q&A: Bart Zub, Digimite Technology

Digimite Technology has built a successful international business on a chain of trust. Over the last 15 years, president and CEO Bart Zub has developed a business philosophy that works. He takes care of his people, they take care of his customers, and his customers bring him new customers—which keeps his business growing. This philosophy led him to standardize with SolarWinds and swap out Veeam® for SolarWinds® Backup. Learn more about Bart and how he achieved his successful business below.

Q: Tell us about Digimite Technology. What types of customers do you work with?

A: We're an MSP that's focused on the small, mid-market enterprise space. If a company makes less than \$3 million in annual revenue, we don't pursue them. We serve customers across all vertical industries and in several different regions of the world. We don't have to do a lot of marketing because we build relationships of trust that lead to word-of-mouth referrals.

Even though we're based in the Chicago area, we have customers all over the world including Singapore, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Poland, Germany, and Spain. But you don't get customers outside of the United States by marketing in the other country. You get customers across geographies through word-of-mouth. For example, a company you helped could get bought by another company later. If you develop a good track record with the department heads, vice presidents, and presidents within several different industries, your name will get passed along since they talk to each other. They'll share your name among their contacts and the business will begin to grow from there. We've been very fortunate in that regard and are currently preparing for additional expansion in Europe.

Q: What is your sales process?

A: Our sales process is never forced. It's always about the business needs of the customer. Can we fulfill their needs? Will it be a mutually beneficial partnership? That's how we approach it. If the relationship doesn't fit, it doesn't fit. We've walked away from business before and I'm okay with that. We don't want to be just another vendor; we want to position ourselves as a true partner.

If it's a true partnership, you're really set. It's like you're actually part of the organization. And that makes your sales process so much easier because when you come up with a new idea, process, improvement, or a new long-term strategy to support their business, you're coming to the table as a business partner. They know you're invested in the relationship, and this gives your advice much more weight.

Q: What do you consider the secret to your success?

A: We're an overnight success story that's been 15 years in the making. We've put in a lot of long days and hard work over several years to get here. There are no shortcuts.

Our real competitive advantage is the people who work here. You can find a lot of IT people to do the same tasks we do. But will those people pick up the phone at 3:00 a.m. and really care about the need that drove your call? When your customers call with an emergency, will they get an actual person who cares about their particular situation and understands the urgency? That's what sets us apart.

I've been doing this since 2006 and I've never laid off an employee. I believe in taking care of my people. My guys get paid well and we've adopted several European-style policies on vacation and healthcare coverage. To provide that kind of environment for solid people who will go above and beyond to support your customers, you have to have solid customer relationships. It's all about the relationships, inside our company and with our customers.

Q: What led you to switch from Veeam to SolarWinds Backup?

A: We were a hard-core Veeam shop. A lot of our customers' environments are ESX-based, and we've always combined it with a local option to take backups offsite. We deployed, sold, and supported Veeam for years. But we decided to use the SolarWinds N-central® platform for remote monitoring and management and my sales rep suggested I look at the integrated SolarWinds Backup. I found it had basically the same feature set as Veeam, but with the advantage of a single, integrated management console. Sure, there are some extra bells and whistles with Veeam, but I can count on one hand how many times we used those features over the last ten years.

Then I sat down with my chief engineer and my business development guy, and we looked at the numbers. We looked at the annual support cost of Veeam including the local storage and additional offsite storage. We found if you aggregate that cost together, and spread it out over 12 months, we can provide the same features and benefits to our customers with SolarWinds and still make margins—even while giving our customers a discount. That makes everybody happy. In many cases, we can now offer longer data retention than they had before, for less. So it was an easy switch. It wasn't a difficult decision at all.

We started with 30 server instances of SolarWinds because we have one of the largest environmental service companies among our customers. They were about to engage in a very long-term support contract with us, which would include backing up their servers. Getting their data offsite was a requirement. With SolarWinds' private cloud, that was included in the cost of the backup product and supported by the same support organization. That alone made things much simpler and cleaner for us. As it turned out, SolarWinds was a great fit for several of our other customers so we started using it for them even before the environmental services contract went into effect.

Q: How did your philosophy about taking care of your team factor into this decision?

A: Our team is close-knit, and we take care of each other. I think it's important to let people have some time to breathe, grab a cup of tea, or whatever. I never want them to hate their job. The convenience factor of working with SolarWinds—having one simple interface to control everything, both local and offsite—saves them time every week.

Before switching to SolarWinds, we had to manage the Veeam component separately for each customer. We also had to deal with the various local data center providers for offsite storage. It all took time and resources. Now the whole thing is streamlined, which makes life better for my team.

Q: What other SolarWinds products do you use?

A: As mentioned before, we use the N-central platform, the MSP Manager, and some SolarWinds network management products based on the Orion® Platform. For Backup, we use the server backup and Microsoft 365™, to protect several customers and ourselves. It's good to have that peace of mind. SolarWinds is working for us, and our customers and team are very happy with it. We're slowly becoming a fully integrated SolarWinds shop. I like knowing the people I partner with. If I'm in trouble, I have one place to go for support. But for the most part, it all just works.

Q: With the perspective you have from 15 years in the industry, what are the business issues you believe some MSPs miss when thinking about data protection?

A: There are two main things. First, not everyone is cut out to be in sales. It's not for everybody. So you need to either develop skill in that area, or hire someone who has it. Second, too many MSPs try to sell features and technology, rather than putting themselves in the shoes of the business owner. Talk about what it would mean to their business if they have a disaster. Can they afford a 48-hour or longer outage? What level of pain can they tolerate?

I would ask the business owner to think about the cost of payroll for that length of time. While the IT guys scramble to restore something that may or may not be fully recoverable, can you afford to pay your employees without your expected revenue coming in? If you have 20 employees, and they can't work for two days, that's not a small amount of money. Then think about the work backlog that's building up during those two days. You could be looking at paying overtime later, just to catch up. And this leads to a delay in product delivery to your end customer, which makes them mad. The whole thing snowballs. The larger the company, the bigger the impact. If the problem is ransomware, will you try to figure out how to buy five thousand dollars in Bitcoin to pay off a hacker? What if you never get that data back at all? Even business owners have to answer to somebody—whether it's their customers or a board of directors.

I've had experiences like this and I can get them back up and running within a couple of hours. *That's* what I'm selling—peace of mind; not technical features. Coming to the table as a trusted partner with a solid working relationship, your recommendations will have weight. Yes, the price matters, but it's far from the only consideration. The relationship of trust is key.

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