



AVNET PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN HELPING HIGH PLAINS TECHNOLOGY EXPAND ITS BUSINESS CAPABILITIES



High Plains Technology develops, sells, implements and supports technology solutions for a wide range of business critical IT issues. High Plains also provides an extensive line of IBM hardware, software and peripherals to help managers develop comprehensive solutions for their business.

High Plains Technology is headquartered in Sioux Falls, SD.

Few companies in the SMB space have the resources to maintain an IT staff with the skill-sets and degree of specialized knowledge sufficient to implement new applications and integrate complex systems on an on-going basis. Nor do they necessarily have the resources to manage and support such systems day-to-day.

Nevertheless, pressure mounts on these companies to continually modernize IT systems and extend the role of technology within their business. That's where Avnet Partner and IBM Premier Business Partner, High Plains Technology, steps in. "Our customers are sophisticated enough that they rely on their IT staff to engage most of their IT issues," says Mike Steiner, one of High Plains' three partners. "We specialize helping them with what remains—complex issues requiring highly targeted consulting and technical expertise."

With comprehensive turnkey capabilities—implementation, integration, conversion, customization and support—High Plains enables SMB to fully exploit technology as a tool for addressing short-term business needs and long-term strategic goals.

Additionally, High Plains resells industry-leading applications developed for specific business challenges, from document imaging and high availability/disaster recovery to enterprise applications and business continuity. And as an IBM Premier Business Partner, the company also provides an extensive line of IBM hardware, software and peripherals, giving them the ability to offer complete solutions, from servers and workstations to enterprise application software and networking infrastructure. "We're able to address the customer's immediate issue even as we help them see beyond it to the area they'll need to focus on next," says Steiner.

Avnet provides High Plains access to valuable resources

Just as High Plains helps its customers by bridging their IT resource and knowledge gaps, Avnet plays a parallel role as High Plains' VAD, augmenting the company's administrative, marketing and operational resources. "Being a small business, we don't have a lot of internal resources to take care of back-office business," says Brad Mendel, another of High Plains' three partners. "Our job is to sell first and run a business second, and we need a partner to stand beside us."

As one example of the expanded business capabilities his company enjoys by virtue of its Avnet partnership, Mendel points to Avnet's early help in navigating IBM's structure and identifying those individuals within IBM who could play a constructive role in High Plains' business. "We didn't have the resources or knowledge in-house to do that, and if we can't provide the right level of skills ourselves, then we go to Avnet," he says.

Mendel also emphasizes the value of Avnet's lead generation capabilities. "Avnet has been a great partner for us in terms of demand generation. We get half a dozen leads a month from them, so they've been a fantastic partner in helping us find customers who are interested in the solutions we offer."

He and Steiner estimate High Plains' business is 10-times bigger now than it was when the company became an Avnet partner in 2001. They attribute a sizeable portion of that growth to the marketing, financial and training resources provided by Avnet, as well as the strategic partnerships Avnet has helped facilitate between High Plains and solution providers in particular verticals and geographies. "Our Avnet account development manager really understands our business, our territory, our customer's mindset and the resources we have to work with internally—both in terms of talent and financial resources," says Steiner. "He is constantly looking for areas or solutions that he thinks are



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worthwhile for us to consider and helps us establish a relationship. That has been a key part of our growth over the past 5-6 years.”

Steiner, who manages High Plains’ service team, takes full advantage of Avnet’s wide array of online and on-site educational events. “Through Avnet we’re able to find and secure training and education opportunities that would be difficult to coordinate by ourselves. Every week or two we get emails from Avnet about new training for our sales or technical resources.” Steiner notes that there have even been cases where Avnet has flown a trainer to his company’s facility, saving High Plains the cost of flying numerous employees to an educational event at an off-site location.

That commitment to helping grow and strengthen High Plains’ business, along with a high degree of personal attention makes the company an enthusiastic Avnet partner. “We definitely take advantage of any financial, marketing and training opportunity we get from Avnet, but just as importantly, we have access to any executive at Avnet we need. In fact, not only do we have access, we know them on a first-name basis. That’s the kind of relationship we were looking for when we chose a VAD,” says Steiner.

High Plains’ HA/DR system safeguards county records across North Dakota

Two days prior to joining High Plains in June of 1999, Steiner left his government position with Cass County, North Dakota, having just secured \$1.2 million from FEMA to build an electronic system to collect land records from every North Dakota county on a daily basis and bring them into a central repository.

Massive flooding two years earlier had left the county recorder’s office under 6-feet of water, destroying the irreplaceable cache of land records stored there. Cass County contracted with Steiner - in his new position with High Plains - to build and administer the system. That system now has over 5.5 million document images stored on it pertaining to land records in 43 counties across North Dakota. Though he is now a Partner in High Plains, Steiner remains a contract employee of Cass County and continues in his development and administrative duties.

When it was launched seven years ago, the fully custom-built system ran on a single HP machine, which also stored the data. Soon, as more North Dakota counties adopted the program it became evident that a more robust and reliable

data replication system would be needed, so High Plains went to work developing a back-up site 250 miles away, in Bismark, North Dakota, that would instantly replicate any changes to the local system in Cass County.

To that end, High Plains—with Avnet playing a significant consulting role, providing expertise in hardware selection, sizing and configuration—crafted a solution that included an IBM Blade Center, IBM SAN, VMware, Doubletake and Visioncore to store and also replicate the data and applications to an off-site disaster recovery location.

High Plains partnered with Palo Alto, California-based VMware, whose software enables multiple “virtual” servers to run on a single physical server. The VMware solution gave High Plains the ability to run the Cass County application in a virtualized environment, providing the ability to create a production, test, and development environment that was too costly to implement in the previous physical server environment.

Avnet then stepped in again, taking an active role in identifying another critical piece of the enhanced system—a High Availability/Replication software solution from Double-Take Software, a Massachusetts-based provider. “No doubt, Avnet’s expertise was invaluable in finding the right pieces and parts to make this work,” says Steiner. “They were the ones who knew that this Double-Take solution was the right solution for what we wanted to do, and it was the technical skill and training they provided that allowed our team to set up and develop the off-site replication piece of the solution.”

The end result produced by utilizing the IBM Blade Center, the virtualization software from VMware, and the Double-Take HA/DR software was the ability to have two identical sites running simultaneously 250 miles apart. The system modernization project executed by High Plains has taken Cass County’s system from one where downtime in an unplanned emergency would have been measured in days or weeks to one where downtime is about 10 minutes. In a planned emergency downtime is 45 seconds.

“You can’t put a cost to the information this system safeguards,” says Steiner. “What used to be physical, unrecoverable pieces of paper is now a robust IT system, which stores electronic copies of every piece of paper that was recorded in 2007, and those same copies are sitting on another server in another city.”

