From Compliance Confusion to a Clear Path Forward

A growing Ohio-based clean energy technology company developing next-generation fuel cell systems for defense and commercial applications sought guidance on cybersecurity compliance requirements that could impact its future growth and operations. By Ashton Solutions

Ashton Solutions, based in Cleveland, Ohio, brings efficiency and peace of mind to IT and helps clients leverage technology for lasting business results. Find out more at ashtonsolutions.com.

The Challenge

A clean energy business supporting federal defense initiatives believed they needed to achieve CMMC Level 2 compliance immediately. The stakes were high. Choosing the wrong compliance path would have resulted in substantial costs, unnecessary operational changes, and potential legal implications if requirements were misunderstood. Like many organizations navigating CMMC, the client had received various recommendations from multiple sources and struggled to determine present requirements from possible future requirements. They needed clarity before making major technology and compliance investments.

The Ashton Approach

Rather than jumping directly into implementation, Ashton began by asking the right questions. Our engineering team conducted a detailed review of the client's business operations, contractual obligations, data handling practices, and current cybersecurity posture. Because compliance decisions can carry both legal and financial consequences, it is critical to understand exactly what standards applied to the organization and at what times. Through that discovery process, Ashton helped the client determine that CMMC Level 2 certification was not yet required. This finding significantly changed the conversation. Instead of embarking on a costly compliance initiative based on assumptions, the client could focus on building a roadmap aligned with their actual requirements and business objectives.

Bringing in the Right Expertise

Ashton Solutions doesn't perform compliance audits; we do, however, work with our clients to ensure compliance before and/or after being audited. We introduced the client to Akron, OH based TrustedSec to provide specialized compliance guidance and help validate the path forward. Together, our teams worked to cut

Their previous provider had gone from "very good and responsive to not very good at providing solutions and not very responsive."

through industry noise and conflicting information surrounding CMMC requirements.
The goal was simple: identify what the client truly needed now, what could wait, and which investments would provide the greatest value.

The Solution

With a clearer understanding of the requirements, Ashton began helping the client implement the cybersecurity controls and operational improvements to support future CMMC readiness. Rather than treating compliance as a checkbox exercise, Ashton focused on creating a practical, phased approach that balanced security, budget, and operational impact. This allowed the client to make informed decisions while avoiding unnecessary work that would not materially improve compliance readiness.

Results

- Clarified the client's actual CMMC obligations and timeline.
- Helped avoid unnecessary and potentially significant compliance spending.
- Reduced confusion created by conflicting compliance guidance.
- Connected the client with trusted compliance specialists for additional expertise.
- Established a practical roadmap toward future compliance requirements.
- Began implementing security controls that strengthen the client's overall cybersecurity posture.

Ashton was selected because the client wanted a partner that could provide clear guidance around compliance requirements instead of simply imposing controls without explanation.

Key Takeaway

Compliance isn't just about implementing controls. It's about understanding which requirements apply to your organization and when. By combining technical expertise with strategic guidance, Ashton helped this client avoid costly missteps, focus on the requirements that mattered, and move forward with confidence.

Ashton SOLUTIONS

Let's discuss your unique needs and how Ashton Solutions can help create value. Contact us at 216.397.4080 or sales@ashtonsolutions.com

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