From Data Protection to Strategic Technology Partnership

How Ashton's relationship with a Northeast Ohio manufacturer grew from backup services into co-managed IT, cybersecurity, compliance guidance, and AI readiness.

By Jim Abbott

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 Client

A Northeast Ohio manufacturer serving the marine industry relies on secure, dependable technology to support daily operations, business continuity, government-related work, and long-term growth. Its environment requires close coordination among internal technology resources, outside specialists, operational leadership, and security and compliance stakeholders.

The Challenge

The company's technology needs did not change all at once. They developed over time, beginning with the need for dependable data protection and expanding into cybersecurity, infrastructure management, user support, compliance planning, and strategic guidance. As technology became more important to manufacturing operations, the organization needed more than a traditional outsourced support relationship. It needed a partner that could work alongside its internal IT resources, add specialized depth when required, and continue adapting as priorities changed.

The Ashton Approach

Ashton's engagement began with backup and data protection services. The relationship then expanded to include Sophos security solutions and broader cybersecurity support. As the client's environment and internal capabilities evolved, Ashton became its managed IT services provider and, ultimately, shifted into a co-managed model. In the current model, the client's internal IT team remains close to users, business processes, and day-to-day operations. Ashton provides the broader bench, specialized expertise, escalation resources, and strategic support that would be difficult to replicate with a small internal team.

- Backup, recovery, and business continuity support
- Sophos cybersecurity technologies and threat protection
- Infrastructure monitoring, planning, and modernization
- Advanced engineering and escalation resources
- User support and vendor coordination

- Strategic technology consulting
- Security and compliance guidance, including CMMC-related efforts

Supporting Security and Compliance

The manufacturer's government-related work adds another layer to technology planning. Ashton has provided guidance in support of the client's CMMC efforts, helping the organization consider security, operational requirements, and future compliance objectives together rather than as separate initiatives. That same discipline now informs decisions about emerging technology. New tools must be evaluated not only for potential value, but also for data handling, governance, security, and their fit within the company's broader technology environment.

The Next Chapter: AI Readiness

Most recently, Ashton has begun working with the client on practical applications for artificial intelligence. The effort is focused on identifying real operational and administrative opportunities while keeping governance, security controls, intellectual property, and CMMC-scoped information in view. The client has standardized on Microsoft Copilot and is evaluating where AI can improve workflows, preserve organizational knowledge, and reduce repetitive work. The emphasis is on deliberate adoption: identifying worthwhile use cases, understanding risk, and establishing the right controls before moving from experimentation into production.

"The strongest technology partnerships do not remain static. They evolve with the client, adding the right capabilities as the business, risk environment, and internal team change."

The Results

What began as a focused backup engagement has grown into a broad, long-term technology partnership. The relationship has adapted as the client added internal IT capabilities, strengthened cybersecurity, addressed compliance requirements, and began exploring AI.

- A mature co-managed IT operating model
- Layered cybersecurity and data protection capabilities
- Access to a broader team of engineers and specialists
- Additional support for internal IT without displacing it
- Guidance on CMMC-related security and planning considerations
- A governed, security-conscious approach to AI adoption
- A technology partnership capable of evolving with the business

A Partnership Built to Evolve

The value of the engagement is not tied to a single product or project. It comes from continuity, institutional knowledge, and the ability to expand or reshape support as the client's needs change.

> From backups and Sophos security to co-managed services, CMMC guidance, and AI readiness, Ashton has remained a consistent technology partner through each stage of the company's evolution.

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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