



Cleveland MSP Sets Itself Apart From the Competition by Offering a Holistic, Sophos-Driven Approach to Security.

Headquartered near Cleveland, Ohio, Ashton Technology Solutions has been a managed service provider (MSP) for 25 years and a Sophos Partner since 2014, achieving Gold status in 2018. Its offerings range from managed IT services and security solutions to cloud computing and compliance. As a member of the Taylor Business Group, a nationwide consortium of over 250 MSPs who share data and best practices, Ashton Technology Solutions holds itself to the highest level of accountability and industry standards. Ashton focuses primarily on small and medium-size businesses with 20 to 200 users across multiple sectors—finance, legal, not-for profit, education, manufacturing, industrial, and others, while differentiating themselves thanks to their focus on next generation security solutions for their clients.

PARTNER-AT-A-GLANCE



Ashton Technology Solutions
Beachwood, Ohio

Website
www.ashtonsolutions.com

Number of Employees
23 employees
75 managed clients
[2,300 endpoints]

Sophos Solutions
Sophos Synchronized Security
Sophos Intercept X Advanced
Sophos XG Firewall
Sophos Device Encryption
Sophos Email Advanced
Sophos Mobile

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Jim Abbott
Sales and Marketing Manager
Ashton Technology Solutions



How has a concierge approach helped Ashton Technology Solutions build strong client relationships?

Sales and Marketing Manager Jim Abbott proudly points to Ashton's processes and procedures implemented to secure its clients, but also to provide insight and strategy in a forward-looking fashion.

"Here in the Cleveland area, there are approximately 170 MSPs. In this highly competitive environment, we have come to understand that the traditional MSP methodologies surrounding data and network – all of which are essential to any business, large or small – are no longer sufficient," he explains. "Our clients demand enterprise grade security solutions, and a partner that can provide the insight and strategy necessary to create an IT roadmap designed with both the present and future in mind."

About 50% of the Ashton's clients have at least one dedicated IT person or a small IT staff, also called "co-managed IT."

The other 50% have none, meaning that all IT is outsourced to Ashton. Many of the organizations that approach Ashton for help have only a basic firewall and traditional antivirus in place. Ashton always begins every conversation with potential clients by showing them how they can benefit from its IT services and how its holistic, measured approach differs from the traditional MSP model of selling solutions which benefit the MSP, rather than the client.

"We are big believers in total transparency and customer education," states Abbott. "Clients see Ashton Technology Solutions as a trusted advisor, someone who will listen to them and provide insight into their security issues and show them how to map out a better, more effective way to secure their business."

Ashton Technology Solutions is also very particular when it comes to choosing its vendors. Rather than offering multiple solutions from different vendors, the organization selects industry leaders like Sophos. The Ashton team commits itself fully to developing expertise in their vendors' core offerings.

How has Sophos firewall helped Ashton build an end-to-end security portfolio?

About six years ago, Ashton heard about Sophos from peers at Taylor Business Group. The Ashton technical team were impressed with the advanced approach to security, with the emphasis on integration, simplicity, and single-pane-of-glass management. Prior to Sophos, the MSP relied on SonicWall for firewall and VIPRE for endpoint protection. Over time, Ashton found that these products were not sufficient to defeat today's rapidly shifting, more sophisticated threats.

After discussion and vetting, Ashton decided to replace VIPRE with multiple Sophos endpoint solutions: Sophos Intercept X Advanced, Sophos Central Device Encryption, Sophos Central Email Advanced, and Sophos Mobile. Soon thereafter, the organization replaced SonicWall as well—first with Sophos SG Firewall, followed by Sophos XG Firewall three years later. Ashton has never looked back. All endpoints under Ashton



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management are covered by Sophos endpoint protection, and 95% of existing clients are using Sophos firewalls.

Today, Ashton offers two plans that are designed to take the burden of IT security management off its clients and provide next-generation protection. Both the basic and advanced plans include Sophos Intercept X, Sophos Email Advanced, remote monitoring, and patching. The advanced plan also includes ongoing help desk support, data backups, and onsite consultation, while the basic plan bills those items separately.

Sophos Intercept X is a vital ingredient in the mix, leveraging machine learning, a form of artificial intelligence, and anti-exploit technology to detect and protect against ransomware, malicious code, and common hacker techniques. Cloud-based Sophos Email Advanced uses Sophos Sandstorm sandboxing technology, a deep learning neural network that detects suspicious payloads containing threats, malware, and unwanted applications, and high-level threats—including ransomware—embedded in documents.

Ashton is currently evaluating Sophos Intercept X Advanced EDR, which helps lighten the load on security teams by automatically detecting suspicious events and elevating them as most in need of immediate attention. The solution replicates the tasks normally performed by skilled analysts, enabling MSPs like Ashton to add expertise without needing to add staff. EDR brings added benefits to the many companies in varying verticals which now have compliance requirements to meet.

Sophos XG Firewall, which includes Sophos Synchronized Security, has also greatly enhanced the MSP's offerings. Ashton has made it a goal to displace more rudimentary firewall installations by showing clients the value of Sophos XG Firewall and how it exposes hidden risks and uses advanced protection to block unknown threats. Sophos Synchronized Security enables Sophos firewalls and endpoints to communicate and share security posture and threat intelligence information. As a result, Sophos XG Firewall is unique in its ability to identify

the user and source of infection on networks as well as automatically limit access to other network resources.

"In the five years since we've adopted these solutions and shared them with users, we've yet to see a successful ransomware attack against any of our clients. There's also been a significant overall reduction in malware," says Abbott. "Sophos provides a better experience for our clients and makes our team more efficient and productive. Our technical staff no longer has to spend valuable time on post-attack cleanup. Sophos is a best-in-class security vendor, bar none. Industry experts like Forrester and Gartner report it, and we see it on a daily basis."

How did Sophos enable Ashton Technology Solutions to win over a reluctant client?

Recently, Ashton responded to a call from a distributing company, a provider of gift, souvenir, and apparel products, truck supplies, and entertainment. The customer has services, travel centers, and convenience stores across the U.S. and in parts of Canada.

Ashton initiated discussions with the company in 2016 when it was hit with ransomware, but the distributing customer was leery of making a security change for fear that something would “break.” However, two years later, when they were hit by a second ransomware attack, they turned to Ashton for help. At the time, the customer’s key IT resource was recuperating from a serious illness and was looking for additional support.

The Ashton team gave the client their full attention, restoring their systems and recovering their data. After the cleanup mission was completed, Ashton recommended a Sophos security plan to alleviate the client’s concerns about future attacks. The company can now rest assured that they can safely and securely conduct business, and their IT resource has the help of an expert partner that manages day-to-day security activities and is ready to assist when issues arise.

“Everything for the customer has been nice and quiet since we brought in Sophos XG Firewall,” remarks Abbott. “On top of that, this has significantly reduced the stress level of their IT person.”

What are the hallmarks of a great vendor-partner relationship?

Ashton Technology Solutions enjoys a strong, mutually supportive relationship with Sophos. “We offer a holistic approach to IT and security, and Sophos is completely in harmony with that,” notes Abbott. “For one thing, Sophos is unique in the marketplace in that they offer an integrated approach to security, where endpoints and firewalls communicate. Another big plus is that we have access to a talented team. Sophos always bends over backwards for us. Sophos engineers are only a phone call away and are always willing to meet with our clients or prospects to show them what Sophos brings to the table.”

One of the things that has further cemented the relationship is the full commitment of the Ashton team to developing a deep level of expertise with respect to Sophos solutions.

The organization currently has seven Sophos-certified engineers, two Sophos-certified architects, and two Sophos-certified sales consultants on staff. On the sales side, Abbott is impressed with the wealth of useful Sophos marketing materials and sales tools that MSPs and their clients can make use of.

“Sophos always goes the extra mile to strengthen the partner relationship. When it comes to our clients, we feel the same way. An MSP can’t always be an expert, but Sophos has allowed us to become that. By choosing Sophos, we know we’ve made the right move for our business and for our clients,” concludes Abbott.

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Ashton Technology
Solutions

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