



EBOOK

PSA AND RMM BUYER'S GUIDE: THE MSP PLATFORM FOUNDATION



Introduction

Service providers depend on remote monitoring and management (RMM) and professional services automation (PSA) to drive their business. Many start with the RMM, adding the PSA later. That often means different vendors, vastly different interfaces, and an unfortunate lack of integration.

You would not choose an automobile engine from one make, and a transmission from another – the two simply would not fit and the car would not move an inch. Even if they did somehow bolt together, the performance would be subpar and the system would ultimately fail.

The same is true for PSA and RMM solutions – when they are closely aligned the synergy enables MSPs to supercharge their operations by leveraging this integration to gain deep efficiencies in problem resolution, project management, expense tracking and billing, and automating key technical and business functions.

Why Read This Guide

This Buyer's Guide walks through what MSPs of all sizes need most from an integrated PSA and RMM solution. While we recognize that no two service providers are alike, there are commonalities among those of similar sizes. This report examines these common traits and breaks down key features of PSA and RMM solutions most valuable to each tier. We will guide you toward self-identification to make it easier to select the solution that best fits your needs.



The Importance of a Modern, Cloud-Based PSA

Just as important as the integration is a modern, cloud-based PSA that is purpose-built for MSPs. So what is a next generation PSA? Let's start with a first-generation solution, which offers too many features – adding no value and bringing with it confusion, inefficiency, the need to highly customize, and ponderous training. They also include frustrating outdated interfaces, and require enough clicking to induce carpal tunnel. Finally, legacy architectures mean slow performance, and security can be achieved only with third-party plugins.

A next-generation PSA solution has none of these shortcomings. Born in the cloud with modern architecture for scale and speed that translates into business efficiency, it brings a wealth of advantages, including:

- ✔ Features essential to MSP success, but not so many or complex as to overwhelm users
- ✔ A clean, modern, intuitive interface, which translates into a better user experience
- ✔ Secure – natively integrates with two-factor authentication to protect an MSP's most critical information
- ✔ Easy administration with Active Directory integration and frequent updates and releases
- ✔ Seamless integration with VSA, saving critical time and money in a way no other combined solution can

✔ *Why Every MSP Needs an Integrated PSA-RMM Solution*

Many small MSPs have not yet adopted a PSA solution, and it behooves them to choose an integrated adjunct to their RMM. Truly, MSPs of all sizes and stripes benefit from the ubiquitous value of an integrated solutions stack. Just as one should dress for the job they aspire to have, MSPs should adopt an integrated stack for where they want to be in **12-18 months** – one that helps them move along this path and supports them when they get there.

MSPs that are early in their development walk a tightrope. While they should not over-purchase, they do need to set the tone so they can scale as the business grows. This means purchasing smart solutions at the right time.



A best-of-breed solution is important, but more critical is a stacked solution that is right for your organization. To choose an optimal solution, you must:

- ✓ Know your current stage to be able to take the right action and invest in the right resources at any given point in time.
That means also understanding the goal of your MSP.
- ✓ Set your workflow foundation.
- ✓ Look at supported integrations you may need, such as antivirus, ties to accounting packages, and reporting or IT documentation add-ons.
- ✓ Explore expansibility, such as through easy to use, open APIs
- ✓ Determine your roadmap to build a solution stack aligned with where you want to be in 12 to 18 months.

COMBINING BMS AND VSA

DRIVES EFFICIENCY ACROSS THE TICKET LIFECYCLE
AND REDUCES TICKET RESOLUTION TIME

by **40%**



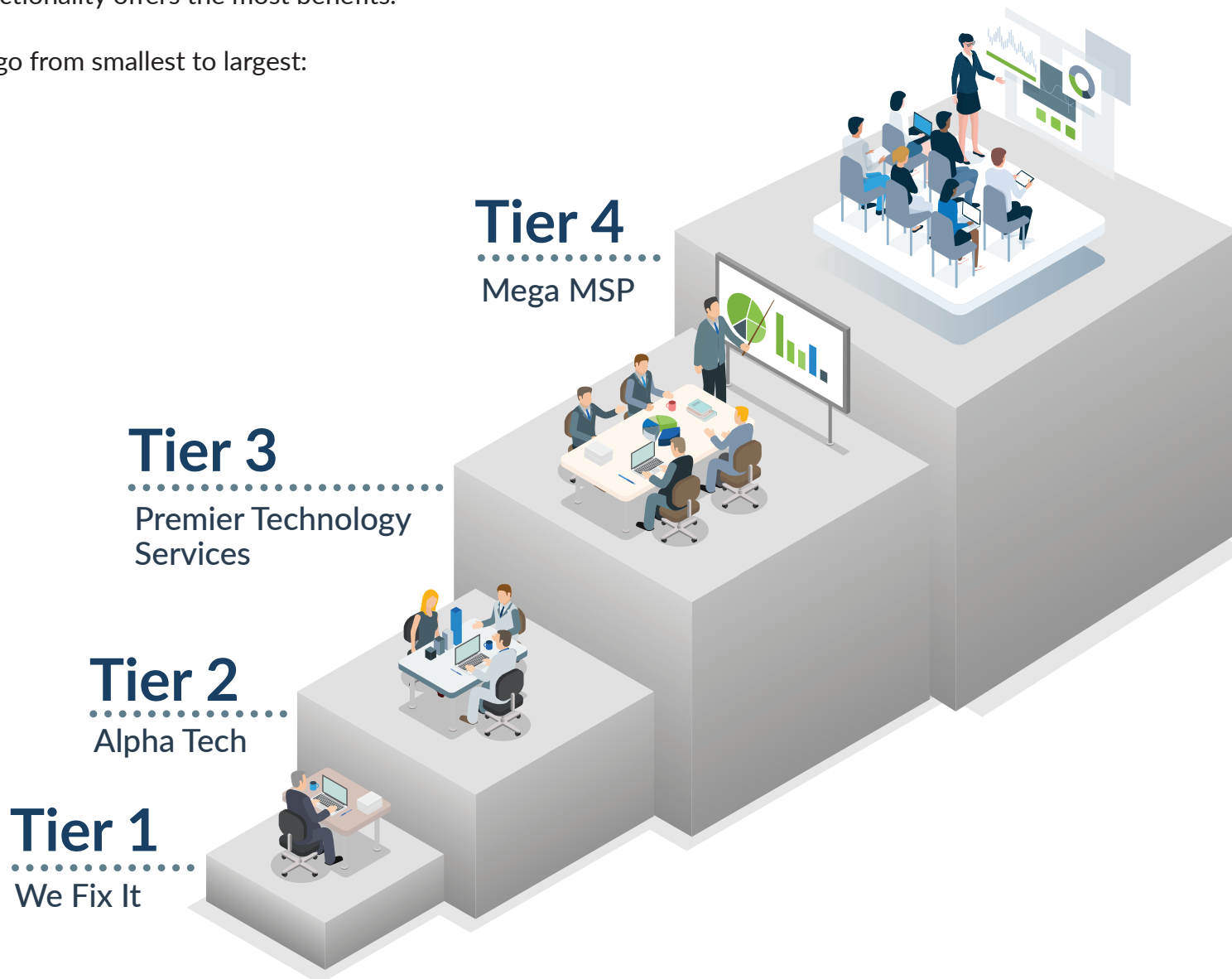
IT FEATURES:

- ✓ Automatic ticket deduping
- ✓ A modern interface with fewer clicks for common tasks
- ✓ Advanced automation, which reduces manual tasks
- ✓ Live Connect, which works with VSA and BMS, and lets techs launch remote sessions directly from tickets
- ✓ Automatic sync, which discovers assets, alarms and ticket changes that are synced across RMM and PSA

What Different Tiers of MSPs Need from an Integrated PSA-RMM Solution

The service provider market is not uniform. Not all MSPs have the same needs, and each has unique characteristics. With that said, we have identified three main types of MSPs and will examine what each level requires from an integrated PSA-RMM solution, and which functionality offers the most benefits.

Our tiers go from smallest to largest:



Tier 1— The We Fix IT MSP

We Fix IT level MSP owners did not grow up dreaming of becoming service providers. Any number of things may have led them down that path. In many cases, the owner left an enterprise IT organization either by choice or due to a restructuring. Or maybe he started a side business to augment personal cash flow, and the business expanded. Whether unplanned or intentional, the driving force behind the We Fix IT's ownership is a lifestyle choice, and that drives its operations.



✓ *Profile*

We Fix IT MSPs have revenue up to \$1 million. They have 1 to 5 employees (sometimes part-time). They manage **25 to 500 endpoints**, and **service 1 to 10 small business** customers with unsophisticated networks.

✓ *Business Model*

We Fix IT providers compete mostly on bread and butter services by making themselves price competitive. While a We Fix IT may offer services on contract, the bulk of its revenue comes from reactionary business (break-fix or project). Highly cash flow driven and usually chasing the next dollar, these shops will agree to do almost any work and figure out contracts, billing, and operations later.

✓ *Maturity*

Many MSPs stay at this stage and never evolve. Some are happy with the lifestyle they have created. Other MSP owners prefer admin duties, rather than the entrepreneurial work. However, some do evolve. These MSPs find greater success in two ways; first by acquiring a few midsize clients on contract that require service-levels. Second, they invest in process maturity as minimizing time/work is the first way to maximize margin and set a path to automation.

Tier 2 – The Alpha Tech MSP

The next step up are Alpha Techs, which are five to 20 person MSPs. Alpha Techs are by and large founded by one good technical person with business acumen and a bit of ambition. Occasionally they also begin as one-man shops and mature, or a business-driven founder assembles geek buddies and starts their business already staffed.

✓ *Profile*

Revenue among Alpha Techs **ranges from \$1.5 million to \$5 million**, with some recording slightly higher sales. On average there are 500 to 2,500 endpoints. Staff extends beyond techs and includes sales, back office, and project management (marketing is typically outsourced). These shops tend to have a diverse client base, some small businesses, and other midmarket companies. Alpha Tech MSPs will sometimes augment an in-house IT organization.

✓ *Business Model*

Alpha Techs have stable revenue, with a large percentage coming from managed services. More sophisticated in their business practices than We Fix IT providers, Alpha Techs have:

- ✓ A regular contract structure
- ✓ A regular process for billing
- ✓ A regular process for account management
- ✓ A methodology for rolling out new services

Most Alpha Techs position themselves as having a “secret sauce” or unique and differentiated services. This enables them to hold price and gain margin.

✓ *Maturity*

Many Alpha Tech companies stay at this profile with revenue often stuck at \$1 million to \$4 million annually. Growth is typically organic, but MSPs that can demonstrate their secret sauce or platform adds significant value are attractive candidates for a merger or acquisition. This enables the Alpha Tech to move to the next tier.



Tier 3 – The Premier Technology Services Provider

Unlike We Fix Its and Alpha Techs, Premier Technology Services are a business that provides technology services, as opposed to being a technology provider that is a business. As such, they operate at a higher IT maturity level and have greater revenue. MSP services and staff are viewed as a financial asset. Profit and growth driven, these shops worry about how to scale, and they are actively trying to grow the business organically and through M&A activity. With success already in hand, these shops have good technical solutions and a growth-driven mindset.



✓ *Profile*

Premier Technology Services have robust revenue of \$5 million to \$20 million. More sophisticated than the tech savvy Alpha Techs, they already leverage integrated solution stacks, do their own marketing, and have solid ticketing and management solutions. Premier Technology Services firms need all these in place to handle the 2,500 to 20,000 endpoints they have under management. Staff usually includes 20-plus employees working across multiple departments and divisions. They have a diverse client base, mostly large SMBs, and may specialize in particular industries or verticals.

✓ *Business Model*

Premier Technology Services firms focus largely on managed cloud and professional services, which drive or precipitate monthly recurring revenue (MRR), rather than the break/fix world We Fix IT shops live in. Size and expertise allow Premier providers to differentiate their offerings, and sales acumen helps these providers articulate why their services are better. For example, some Premier firms are experts in security and are moving toward becoming MSSPs, or they may be strong niche players with data center or networking prowess.

✓ *Maturity*

While already mature and significant in size, Premiers long to be Mega MSPs. Often they look to other geographies for new business, or they buy up smaller providers to fuel growth.

Tier 4 – The Mega MSP

As you can guess, Mega MSPs are the largest MSPs. They compete with solutions providers with household names like IBM, Cognizant, and Wipro.

These \$25 million-plus top-level solution **providers have 10 employees per every \$1 million** or so of revenue – an impressive ratio. Here, 10 percent to 30 percent of revenue is from projects, not including software sales. With this size, the largest gains in growth comes in chunks – through acquisitions.



Tier-Appropriate Technology

Every MSP tier has different technology priorities and needs. What follows is our rundown developed through years of working with thousands of MSPs and being close to and partnering with solution services industry experts.

Let your revenue range be your guide to what is most important in a PSA-RMM stack. Features and functions sound cool, but if you do not anticipate needing a function in the next 12 months, do not invest in it.

Technology evolves quickly. Why lock yourself into functionality that will likely be more advanced by the time you actually need it? Being locked in limits you, and your resources are best deployed elsewhere.

✓ *We Fix IT Buying Checklist*

We Fix IT shops need best-of-breed PSA and RMM solutions, but just as important is the ability of these solutions to work together.

CRITICAL PSA FUNCTIONALITY

- ✓ Ticketing system
- ✓ Customer portal
- ✓ Basic billing
- ✓ Basic project management
- ✓ A mechanism to organize contacts for the owner or sales rep

CRITICAL RMM FUNCTIONALITY

- ✓ Ease of configure and use
- ✓ Limited workflows
- ✓ Basic reporting
- ✓ Remote monitoring
- ✓ Basic alerting
- ✓ Some automated patching
- ✓ Integrated security and backup



HOW A PSA AND RMM ARE BETTER TOGETHER FOR WE FIX IT

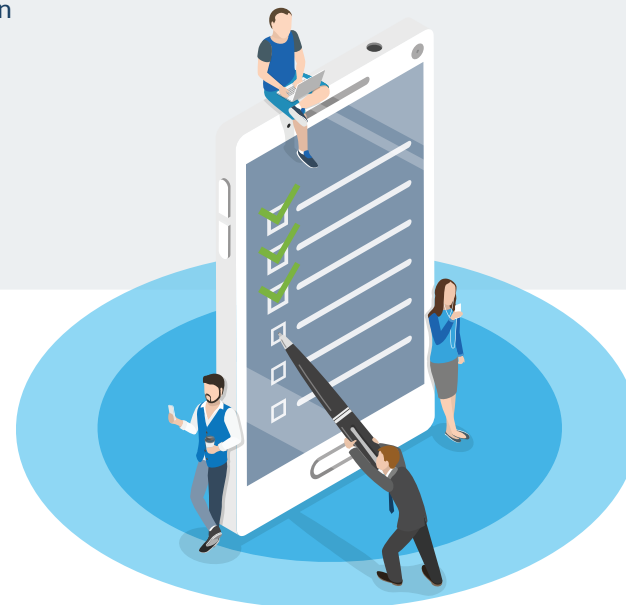
- ✓ The UI should be modern, clean and easy to use for both sets of solution functions
- ✓ Tight integration between ticketing and remote control
- ✓ Low price point, especially for the PSA which is non-revenue generating

✓ *Alpha Tech Buying Checklist*

Alpha Tech MSPs have higher-level needs. For one, they must market themselves effectively to grow their business. Because there are more endpoints, ticketing needs are more sophisticated. Having an internal remote support desk is critical. Along those lines, a dispatching calendar starts to matter. With a PSA in hand, Alpha Tech MSPs communicate with customers, track and close opportunities, forecast project work, leverage automation, and gain a sense of how much revenue they will generate in the future from closing deals. You cannot steer the boat by looking over the stern; if you do not know how much money you are going to have, you cannot make proper business decisions.

PSA FUNCTIONALITY

- ✓ Basic reporting
- ✓ Enhanced project management
- ✓ Ticket deduplication and tracking through all stages of resolution
- ✓ Billing and time tracking (including the ability to bill based on time or materials, block hours, block rate, and fixed rate, and the ability to track billing activity)
- ✓ CRM
- ✓ Integration with key accounting packages and automated documentation creation
- ✓ The capability to quickly turn opportunities into quotes
- ✓ Team activity tracking
- ✓ A dispatching calendar



RMM FUNCTIONALITY

Alpha Techs need an RMM with depth — entry-level solutions are not a viable option for this bunch. These providers can no longer afford to be reactive; they need functionality that is proactive and predictive. Part of this is laying a foundation for automated processes to keep the cost structure of the MSP under control, and not overinvesting in headcount. The goal is to scale. Alpha Techs also need organizational features to keep clients, machines, and SLAs manageable. For example, they must think about client onboarding and develop a process with automated components that key off discovery.

Other critical RMM needs include:

- ✓ Automated scalable processes
- ✓ Policies that enable you to scale with consistency
- ✓ Agent procedures to allow customization
- ✓ Monitoring that extends beyond simple up/down and to the network
- ✓ Smart alerting
- ✓ Auto-remediation — get the system to do as much work as possible
- ✓ Deep configuration capability to support multiple SLAs
- ✓ Strong integrations, particularly across security and backup, to enable premium service offerings
- ✓ A community of peers to share tips and automation techniques and scripts
- ✓ Client-facing reporting



An Alpha Tech should be willing to make the investment in deep configuration functions. This is a business foundation for many years to come, and shortcuts will only cost more money in the long run.

How a PSA and RMM are better together for Alpha Tech

Setting a strong workflow foundation is the most critical benefit a unified PSA-RMM solution offers. Ideally, a solution will help facilitate the fewest steps to complete a needed task. Think about native architecture vs. integration. For Alpha Techs to grow, they need to be able to scale. Aligning platform technology facilitates this. If this is not an option, look for integration mechanisms with a proven track record, and integrated solutions with the flexible and scalable workflow.

✓ Premier Technology Services Buying Checklist

Premier providers rely on the functionality that We Fix IT and Alpha Techs do, but they have additional and specific higher-level needs.

PSA FUNCTIONALITY

- ✓ Migration tool
- ✓ Survey integration
- ✓ Dashboards and business intelligence
- ✓ Marketing automation (e.g., for drip campaigns)
- ✓ A rock-solid ticketing and service desk with deep integration to other systems

RMM FUNCTIONALITY

- ✓ A true business visibility platform – Premier firms are more interested in information than automation
- ✓ Well-documented workflows
- ✓ Unified interface across solutions
- ✓ Integrated network systems management
- ✓ Ability to deliver mission-critical business applications
- ✓ Predictive analytics and containers
- ✓ Network topology mapping
- ✓ Scalable to tens-of-thousands of endpoints
- ✓ Load balancing



How a PSA and RMM are better together for Premier Technology Services

For Premier Technology Services firms it's all about scale and time savings. By their very nature Premier firms are larger, and time savings per employee goes further. Engineers are a prime example of this. A Premier Firm will typically have a stable of engineers. Saving just 15 minutes per engineer, per day translates to a meaningful amount of incremental revenue for the company. The right PSA-RMM combination feeds this environment by creating efficiencies within the alerting and service desk operation needed to realize this type of time savings and incremental revenue opportunity. Further, Premier providers will leverage a robust PSA workflow engine to route work to the right resources, which also generates time savings.

THE TAKEAWAY AND NEXT STEPS

As an MSP, RMM technology drives your services, and PSA steers your business and manages projects. These solutions are more than strategic – they are fundamental. As a unit, the PSA-RMM combo has its own ROI payback and should be evaluated as such. Consider the all-in ROI, rather than system-by-system calculations. Part of this unified process is to avoid augmenting your stack with point solutions, as this ends up costing more in money and inefficiencies in the long run.

Getting the right stack may mean acquiring new next-generation unified solutions and swapping out the old. Changing systems or components is never fun, but it is part of strongly driving your business forward.

Being reactive to unplanned change events is more costly, and has a negative impact on the business as a whole. It is important to view of the stack as a critical and strategic component of your business.

Your roadmap should define where you want to be in 12 to 18 months – and how to get there. This in turn will drive your strategic technology choices. All too often, we wait until the breaking point rather than making road mapping and product selection a planned part of operations.

Making technology choices when a crisis hits is not optimal. For example, a personnel change inspires a switch to a new tool, or a new client requires more monitoring to support an SLA. Many mistakes are made using this reactive approach, which is especially prevalent for We Fix ITs and Alpha Techs, which tend to avoid migration at all costs.

One closing thought: The market is not cut and dry. Although we have defined four tiers of MSPs, this is just a guide. No MSP falls squarely into one profile or another. However, figuring out where, in general, you fit and plotting a path toward an optimum solution stack as your strategic differentiator is key to success.

BEING REACTIVE TO UNPLANNED
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ON THE BUSINESS AS A WHOLE.

It is important to view of the stack as a critical
and strategic component of your business.

How BMS and VSA are Better Together

BMS and VSA work together in many ways, in particular integrating remote troubleshooting with projects and tickets. Combined with BMS, VSA's Live Connect functionality presents exclusive benefits to MSPs:

✓ *Real-time Direct Access to Valuable Assets*

- Allows you to launch directly into remote sessions from BMS tickets and assets
- Auto-generates tickets from VSA alarms with asset attached

✓ *Next-Generation Discovery*

- Delivers the deepest level of device fingerprinting available on the market today, putting the best data (e.g., patch history, age, and last disk defrag) into your techs' hands by embedding critical information directly into the related ticket

VSA offers MSPs the most advanced automation capabilities in the industry. When integrated seamlessly with BMS, MSPs are able to **cut the volume of support by over 30 percent.**

✓ *Automatic Asset Sync*

- All of the assets you discover in customers using VSA get carried over to BMS, automatically syncing discovery assets, alarms, and ticket changes. This ensures that your PSA is always up to date with your customer requirements.



Customer Corner – 3 MSPs on the Value of BMS-VSA Integration

As an MSP startup, Spectrum Data Networks needed core RMM and PSA solutions. Kyle Tennyson, a managing partner at startup, chose VSA and BMS, and uses BMS project management capabilities for onboarding. “You can onboard a client, but if you don’t set certain tasks for the technicians involved in onboarding a client, they fly by the seat of their pants,” said Tennyson. “I start with a customer we are onboarding, put all the details of the system in such as address locations. Once you enter all that in, it just puts it over to VSA. It is done from that aspect.”

The 20 is a group of MSPs that all leverage the same underlying technology. Tim Conkle, CEO of The 20, already adopted VSA for his partners, but used ConnectWise as its PSA. With that tool failing to scale, The 20 moved to BMS, and used the Kaseya migration tool that moves providers from any other PSA to BMS – a huge benefit for The 20 and its MSP affiliates. Now The 20 has a robust scalable PSA that works tightly with its RMM. One key benefit is integration with Kaseya Live Connect: One-click access to Live Connect remote control in VSA enables MSPs to remotely troubleshoot and manage endpoints regardless of their location, Conkle explained.

MSP simpleroute delivers efficient services through the ease and functionality of BMS by Kaseya. “We knew VSA was the right RMM platform for our team, but we couldn’t risk losing a seamless integration between our RMM and PSA. So BMS was the clear-cut choice,” said Brett Johnson, president of simpleroute.

“The switch to BMS put us in a position where we could seamlessly perform tasks within VSA and simultaneously manage the business without interruption. Being able to merge that data together all within a single pane of glass helps us make better, more informed decisions with our clients. Long term it’s going to enable us to sit down with our clients and have a real discussion with them on the state of their IT.”





Discover the Power of VSA + BMS Today

Getting started is easy.

Finally, the Kaseya professional services team will ensure your workflows, financial data, and contracts are effectively rebuilt – and that your team is fully trained and enabled to embrace the next-generation features of BMS.

[Sign up for a Demo Today.](#)



About Kaseya

Kaseya is the leading provider of complete IT management solutions for managed service providers (MSPs) and midsize enterprises. Through its open platform and customer-centric approach, Kaseya delivers best in breed technologies that allow organizations to efficiently manage and secure IT. Offered both on-premise and in the cloud, Kaseya solutions empower businesses to command all of IT centrally, easily manage remote and distributed environments, and automate across IT management functions. Kaseya solutions manage over 10 million endpoints worldwide. Headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, Kaseya is privately held with a presence in over 20 countries. To learn more, visit www.kaseya.com.

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