



# Managed Services Winner

● This MSP (managed services provider) put Gold's Gym franchises on a healthy regimen of managed services, saving the customer \$10,000 per month.

by Chris Loring

**W**hat's your definition of managed services? Although there are many, the end result for all definitions is supposed to be the same — the generation of recurring revenue for your company, while providing your customers with predictable, cost-controlled IT services. A managed services practice can also make revenue streams more predictable for MSPs, while differentiating MSPs from the national chain repair stores. It was that thought process that drove Jon Lawrence to redirect his IT service and repair business to a managed services practice in 2005. Lawrence is the president of Data Balance — an MSP serving the greater Clearwater, FL region — and the winner of the 2008 *Business Solutions* magazine Channel Innovator Award for managed services.

Lawrence wanted to move Data Balance beyond its break-fix and project services provider business model. "Working on a project basis and simply reacting to IT problems was grossly inefficient, as it tied engineers' billable hours and travel time to revenue and often came at the expense of end users," explains Lawrence. However, as he has learned, changing the sign on your front door to show you are now an MSP is not enough to drive business your way. Since so many VARs are jumping into the managed services space, MSP innovation is a real point of differentiation. Innovation requires MSPs to look at providing unique solutions that don't necessarily fit into any predefined business category.

A recent example of an innovative Data Balance solution is the company's success implementing its managed services for the Gold's Gym franchises in Tampa, FL. "Gold's Gym needed better service levels and optimum uptime for its main retail application called Aphelion," says Lawrence. "That application is critical to Gold's business growth and service as it keeps track of member dues, conducts credit card transactions

in the retail store, and assists customer service representatives when signing up new members." All four Tampa franchises had experienced severe application outages. Gold's Gym estimated it lost about \$10,000 per month, per franchise, due to downtime.

To address the customer's challenges, Data Balance utilized its managed services offering called Pro Balance, which uses Kaseya's IT automation framework including computer inventory, audit, remote desktop management, remote support, patch management, software deployment and update, and the backup and disaster recovery add-on module.

Pro Balance proactively ensures that all of the gym's systems are updated regularly with security patches while new software revisions are continuously monitored. The Gold's Gym managed services model puts the responsibility of identifying, reporting, and troubleshooting IT issues on the shoulders of Data Balance engineers, giving them greater

control over the customer's IT environment. Data Balance now has the ability to proactively manage the customer's IT systems — stopping IT incidents before they affect the business. This allows the management at Gold's Gym the luxury of focusing entirely on their core business.

## Use Managed Services To Provide Interactive Services

This integrated offering of Pro Balance and Kaseya has helped the MSP detect, manage, and successfully resolve various issues for Gold's Gym while working with the client's employees to resolve those issues. For example, Pro Balance alerted Data Balance engineers to a failing UPS (uninterruptible power supply) on the franchise's main server, which was repaired by the Gold's Gym staff without crashing the company's Web site. Pro Balance has also helped monitor the club's WAN bandwidth and usage, identifying trouble spots before they have affected the business. In addition, the backup module,



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**HEADQUARTERS:**  
CLEARWATER, FL

**FOUNDED:** 2002

**VENDORS:** DELL, KASEYA,  
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which is used to image workstations in the clubs and the servers in the data center, has reduced the time it takes to configure new hardware or to roll back to earlier workstation images.

Pro Balance has put Data Balance technology experts and Gold's Gym on the same team — an innovative approach to IT services. The flat-rate model aligns the interests of both parties, allowing for known expenses for Gold's Gym and predictable revenue for Data Balance. Data Balance increased its ability to scale its services to meet customer demand. It also was able to better align its services with customer goals, including uptime service level agreements, performance benchmarks, and budgetary requirements.

For Gold's Gym, the key was ensuring its retail appli-

cation was available for use at all times. Gold's Gym was able to stop the approximate \$10,000 per month loss for each franchise that resulted from application downtime. Gold's Gym also benefited from the remote service which eliminated engineers coming in and disrupting and inconveniencing staff, ultimately preventing customer service issues. Data Balance engineers were able to remotely patch and update all the systems on the network, ensuring they were running optimally and secured properly from external threats. Many companies can provide managed services. However, by taking a well-planned, proactive approach with Gold's Gym, Data Balance was able to provide better IT services while earning predictable, recurring revenue each month — innovating to succeed as an MSP. ●