

ATS GROUP BANKS ON COMPETENCE, FAMILIARITY, AND PRICE



Who you choose to do business with says a lot about how you run your own business. So, when executives at the IBM i hosting business ATS Group sought out a trusted partner to provide high quality high availability for its customers at a fair price, the decision wasn't difficult in the end.

Advanced Technology Services Group was founded by Tim Conley in 2001 as a specialized systems integrator, delivering complex, high-skill projects for enterprise clients. From the start, ATS served as an extension of its channel partners' teams, providing deep technical expertise and capabilities that complemented their own resources.

That close level of customer interaction with diverse Fortune 500 companies developed a particular level of accountability in ATS Group, which earned a reputation for integrity, dedication, and technical expertise. Where some system integrators would shy away from jobs that were too difficult, ATS Group technicians leaned in to get the job done and make sure the customer was satisfied.

As the years rolled on, ATS Group's business model evolved. Today, the Malvern, Pennsylvania-based company continues to manage on-prem IBM i systems and provide excellent system integration services for its 500 North American customers. In addition to providing system management and integration services, the company runs IBM i environments on behalf of customers through its ATS Power Cloud offering. ATS Group also has a software division that develops and sells Galileo Suite, a collection of monitoring tools for IBM i that it originally developed for its services clients but is now sold on a standalone basis.

When ATS Power Cloud was established in 2021, the company and its customers faced a new need: high availability and disaster recovery. ATS Group manages its customers' IBM i environments across two data centers, providing geographic separation. All that it needed was high availability software to replicate data between the two data centers and provide failover protection against unplanned outages and natural disasters.

ATS Group didn't need to look far for an IBM i high availability partner. In fact, it only needed to look a few dozen miles in the north Philadelphia suburbs for a good match: Maxava.

According to ATS Group Director of Managed Services John Byers, the two companies share a common philosophy when it comes to providing a quality product with great customer service at a fair price.

Byers recognizes that Maxava HA covers all the bases without unnecessary features that would drive up the complexity and the price. The high availability software provides fast but efficient replication of IBM i data and objects, in either synchronous or asynchronous modes. While other HA products often get behind in replication, Maxava HA's innovative design minimizes backlogs. An intuitive GUI, thorough system auditing, and the capability to support multiple replication topologies and OS levels are further evidence of Maxava HA's product maturity.

In addition to appreciating Maxava's software quality, Byers also appreciates Maxava's straightforward, collaborative approach. He has confidence in Maxava Global Vice President John Dominic, who heads Maxava's North America headquarters in Doylestown, Pennsylvania and recognizes that both companies share a preference for plain language and substance over hype and buzzwords. Byers also notes that Maxava's accessible leadership structure makes it easy to connect with senior team members when timing matters.

"I'm completely comfortable with John and his team," Byers says. "The product works and it has everything that we need. It checks every single box. I would pay more money if another vendor had a product that was superior, but I haven't seen it yet. And if I have a question, I can call straight to the top and I'll get an answer."

Byers has worked in the IBM midrange for decades and is familiar with other HA providers. He worked with Maxava at a previous IBM i hosting company, so when he came to ATS Group to help build its cloud offering, he knew which HA product could get the job done at half the cost of competing solutions.

While the cost of implementing a high availability solution has come down in recent years, it can still pose a barrier for companies that keep a close eye on their bottom line. Maxava's combination of proven

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capability and cost efficiency meshes very well with the priorities of ATS Group and its customers, according to Byers.

“I remember back in the day; you couldn’t sell high availability software because it was so expensive. It was almost a non-starter half the time,” Byers added. “It’s another reason why we stick with Maxava.”

Demand for HA is picking up, thanks in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced companies to honestly assess their appetite for downtime. Smaller companies that may have foregone HA protection in the past are now looking for ways to keep their businesses running in the event of an unplanned outage or natural disaster. These organizations are finding that Maxava fits the bill, both for capabilities as well as price.

These factors are helping to drive Maxava HA sales at ATS Group, Byers says. “There is a value to sleeping at night, knowing that things can failover at two in the morning if they need to,” he adds.

There is one more dynamic at play when it comes to the partnership between Maxava and ATS Group: data migrations.

Customers that have lots of data on their IBM i systems may not be able to cope with the 48 hours or more of downtime that it can often take to restore a system remotely from tape. Sending data across the network using a tool like Maxava can cut those data migration times considerably, enabling them to move away from on-prem systems and into the ATS Power Cloud in a much shorter amount of time than

they would otherwise. Thanks to licensing flexibility, ATS Group and Maxava can provide short-term rentals of the Maxava HA software to support data migration projects.

ATS Group is currently expanding its Maxava business, which includes training additional technicians to become proficient in Maxava HA. Because every IBM i environment is unique, it’s essential to take a tailored approach during the high availability installation. This ensures that all critical data and objects are properly configured for replication and that role swap testing is carried out effectively.

The Maxava HA training sessions that ATS Group technicians have completed has reinforced the company’s original decision to work with Maxava in the first place, said ATS Group Vice President of Marketing Kristy Slimmer, who also leads the company’s partner compliance efforts.

“I have never worked with a team so enthusiastic about education,” Slimmer said of her ATS Group colleagues. “In other places, it’s very difficult to get people to take certifications or to attend training on new products. Here, the team embraces every opportunity to expand their skills, which ultimately means our clients benefit from the most up-to-date expertise available.”

When company cultures align, it can be a very positive thing for employees and customers. In the case of ATS Group and Maxava, shared values around product excellence, superior customer service, and competitive price are aligning to create a special midrange partnership.