

Sentinel Tech Uplevels IT Solutions for Oregon Small Businesses

Uplevel's "Unbox" allows Sentinel Tech to improve security, decrease response time, and improve efficiency while serving a property management firm with six locations across Oregon



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Kyle Brown
Owner, Sentinel Tech

Customer profile



SentinelTech

Provider	Sentinel Tech
Industry	Property management
Location	Portland, Oregon
Website	www.sentineltechinc.com

Challenge

Onboarding, securing, and managing information technology (IT) across six office locations.

Solution

Uplevel's "Unbox" integrated firewall, VPN, Wi-Fi, and remote management and notifications.

Benefits

- Integrated functionality makes network design, deployment and management easy
- Keeps security current via automatic updates
- One-click site-to-site VPNs deployment
- Easy, secure guest Wi-Fi
- Remote access, notifications, management minimizes travel time, escalations

Sentinel Tech was founded by Kyle Brown in 2001 with the guiding philosophy of providing responsive and honest IT support and treating clients' networks and infrastructure as if they were its own. Sentinel Tech remains fanatically devoted to this philosophy, and it shows in the success and devotion of our clients. They guarantee this level of devotion to every client.

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Kyle Brown
Owner

From doctors' offices to real estate agencies to pizza places that take orders online, virtually every local business relies on its information technology (IT) infrastructure to deliver the ultimate customer experience. Yet many find themselves at a disadvantage, forced to choose between investing too much in high-end systems and trying to make due with patch-worked networks built on consumer-grade equipment from the likes of Best Buy.

Sentinel Tech, a Portland, Oregon-based IT consultant has been making a name for itself by catering to the unique needs of smaller local companies. Founder Kyle Brown recently became intrigued by a new "infrastructure as a service" model introduced by Uplevel Systems.

"Over the past few years we've grown our consulting support for small- and medium-sized businesses and we're positioning ourselves to take on many more clients," says Brown. "Uplevel showed me their solution, which was designed with smaller companies in mind, and I was immediately excited about it."

The Uplevel delivers supports highly secure networking, Wi-Fi, storage, remote access and security with one integrated, easy-to-configure device at the customer site and remote management via the cloud. IT consultants and managed service providers (MSPs) access the Uplevel gateway to monitor customer networks anywhere and anytime, and receive proactive alerts that help prevent issues from becoming problems.

The challenge: migrating to a more efficient, secure, cost-effective model

"The challenge," says Kyle Brown, "was figuring out how to migrate existing clients or onboard new clients to the new model."

An ideal opportunity quickly presented itself when Sentinel Tech won the business of helping a fast-growing property management company link multiple sites following expansion. With a large office in Woodburn and smaller centers throughout the state, the staff travels often and wished to be able to securely access centralized IT resources from any networked location. Previous incidents with ransomware attacks also indicated a need to improve backup, storage, and overall data security.

Uplevel represented an elegant, affordable, all-in-one solution.

"It was obvious right away that the client's existing infrastructure was too much—too expensive and overly complicated—for what they needed," says Brown. "We wanted to help them scale back to a more elegant solution without requiring them to spend a lot of money on equipment upfront. Our guiding philosophy is always ultimately to help our clients save money wherever we can."

The property management firm had been maintaining two large file servers at its Woodburn location so Sentinel Tech explored options for moving its Exchange server offsite and scaling the file server back to a simpler, less costly network attached storage (NAS) approach. When a domain controller suddenly gave out, Kyle Brown seized the opportunity to help them streamline even more.

The solution: Uplevel's integrated SMB networking

"We devised a new solution that had Uplevel providing the simplicity and network security the client needed," says Brown. "We were able to create a site-to-site VPN linking smaller offices to the main site to give them access to the NAS so they could easily share files."

Brown found Uplevel's site-to-site solution to be more "turnkey" than previous approaches: "A simple web configuration portal allowed me to control things much more easily with a less travel and time spent onsite, which save the client a lot of money on visits."

The property management company's security improved as Sentinel Tech gained more granular control and remote management capabilities. "We can segment nodes out by VLAN so they're not touching the main network," says Brown. "Control over guest Wi-Fi access also improved. The client really likes that they can control the allocation of bandwidth used by the guest network to prevent things like excessive streaming from cutting into their staff's productivity."

"We also looked at installing a simple Netgear firewall at each location but the Uplevel solution was more turnkey, required less configuration and less 'care and feeding' than the other option. We also estimated the costs over time and ultimately went with Uplevel." Overall, he reports, the client's IT infrastructure has improved with advanced functionality, better security, and Sentinel Tech's increased ability to proactively monitor the network.

"Employees now have ubiquitous access to digital assets and networked resources from any location, and we've noticed that everything has been a lot more stable," Brown says. "When something does need attention, or there's an issue with an ISP or other provider, I get alerts from Uplevel on my phone so we can get out ahead of any issues might be coming up."

The result: managed services model proves a "win-win"

With the Uplevel solution in place, both Sentinel Tech and its customers are evolving toward a more efficient, predictable and high-performing managed service model. "The new arrangement is definitely more of a managed solution," says Brown. "We can oversee important aspects of the network and Wi-Fi. I can easily VPN in and manage printers and other devices. For us, better remote management means a lot less drive time to go onsite and troubleshoot small routine things. For the client, that translates into everything performing much more reliably with fewer issues that impact users."

While smaller companies are often reluctant to invest in upgrading their information technology (IT) infrastructure until absolutely necessary, or to agree to recurring fees inherent in managed service models, Brown says Sentinel Tech "didn't have to push very hard" to convince the property management company of the advantages of the Uplevel solution. Pricing optimized for SME's budgets allows MSPs to profit while delivering a better class of service.

For Sentinel Tech, the ease of using the Uplevel system promises to accelerate growth by making it easier to support more small-to-medium enterprise (SMEs) clients with less travel to customer sites. Perhaps best of all, new services—new recurring revenue streams for the provider—can be added remotely.

"The ultimate sign of a true 'win-win' is that everybody wants to do more," says Brown. "This particular client is onboarding a bunch of new properties, which means more things to fix, so we will be expanding the Uplevel solution to an additional seven sites before very long. IT is always going to be an unavoidable expense for the client but now we have a solution that I know is saving them money and reliably addressing their business needs."

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