Strix LA Uses Uplevel to Make Small Business IT Easy

Strix LA provides high-caliber managed IT services to Louisiana companies with fewer than 50 employees. Uplevel small-to-medium (SMB) infrastructure-as-a-service solutions deliver high performance and easy remote configuration out of the box.

Partner Profile

Provider	Strix LA
Industry	Managed Service Provider
Based	Louisiana
Website	www.strixla.com

Customer Challenge

Finding affordable, secure networking solutions that perform as expected without requiring technicians on site.

Uplevel Solution

Replace gateway and firewalls with integrated device that promotes streamlined remote deployment with no upfront cost.

"Uplevel shared our philosophy for serving companies with 50 employees or less. They were hyper-focused on making things very easy to deploy, and easy to use and operate."

David DeArmond
Owner, Strix LA

Business Benefits

- Fast, simple deployment
- Pure subscription model
- Easy remote management
- Architected for small businesses

It's no secret that small-to-medium businesses (SMBs) face perennial challenges in managing information technology (IT):

- Little (or no) dedicated budget
- Lack of in-house expertise
- Misconceptions about data security
- Lower-priority treatment from providers

With networks playing a vital role in virtually every business, many turn to trusted consultants or managed service providers (MSPs) to keep things running smoothly. This model delivers mutual advantages compared with the old reactive "break/fix" approach, but its success hinges in part upon core technology solutions performing as promised out of the box.

"Networking is always a difficult undertaking, and you often encounter issues trying to reach out remotely and get equipment up and running at client sites," says David DeArmond, Owner of Strix LA, a Baton Rouge-based provider of managed IT solutions to businesses across Louisiana and Texas. "The question is how quickly and easily can the vendor help resolve these issues."

Frustrations with remote deployments of conventional solutions recently led Strix to begin migrating clients to Uplevel Systems' SMB IT-as-a-Service platform.

"We had spent eight or nine hours deploying Barracuda firewalls in person at a client's remote office in Kingwood, Texas," DeArmond recalls challenges at one multi-site customer. "We got the site-to-site VPN working, then some devices failed. The vendor sent new ones that were supposed to be pre-configured but they didn't work when the client plugged them in. Our technician spent hours on the phone with a VP at the client's site working through config-urations to get the firewalls up and running. The client was patient, but it didn't make the impression we'd have liked. We were hoping it would be much easier."

Around this same time, DeArmond read an article about Uplevel Systems, provider of a highly integrated managed services platform architected specifically for small business networks.

"What we really needed was an approach that more closely mimicked what we do here at Strix," says DeArmond, "one that matched what we promised by creating a better, simpler way of doing things."

Strix placed an Uplevel system in its network to try things out. "We replaced some Barracuda equipment and the Uplevel box did exactly what they said it would," DeArmond says. "The system was easy to set up and worked just like it was supposed to."

Next, with its client's firewall licenses about to expire, Strix installed Uplevel at two of the company's sites. "We got the devices out in the field and it all came up with minimal effort," DeArmond recalls. "Everything just worked."

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Pure subscription model delivers a win-win

Small companies may hesitate to invest in upgrading their IT infrastructures due to upfront expenses. Many also balk at the idea of managed services for fear of paying ongoing fees for support they might never need.

The all-inclusive subscription model favored both by Strix LA and Uplevel Systems overcomes both objections to make managed services a highly compelling "win-win" proposition.

"Our managed services have always included the networking equipment as part of the subscription, so clients don't have to invest capital upfront in order to upgrade their technology," DeArmond explains. "We've gone through several different networking providers like Cyberoam and Meraki and really like the fact that Uplevel uses the same model we do. Uplevel's all-in subscription model means that we don't have to invest heavily in equipment and licenses at the outset to support our customer engagement model like we have had to do in the past."

Along with saving clients money and making a strong first impression, Uplevel's ease of deployment directly impacts MSPs' own bottom line.

"Our profit model is completely based on how quickly we accomplish the goals we set out to achieve," DeArmond explains. "The longer we spend deploying new equipment, or fixing existing gear, the more it eats into our profitability. Having a solution that's virtually plug and play that we can configure in minimal time allows us to recoup our investment faster, and often using less specialized technicians."

Uplevel also provides hardware and software updates at no additional cost so MSPs can keep clients current without either company having to incur the cost of change.

Smarter device makes for a smarter, simpler solution

Besides the affordable monthly subscription that includes equipment, the Uplevel solution helps MSPs differentiate on the basis of versatility and simplicity. Providers can use Uplevel to deliver and remotely manage clients' Wi-Fi, site-to-site VPNs, backup and storage, all with enterprise-class security built in.

Strix LA also found Uplevel's partner support to be highly responsive. "We had one client experiencing significant lag time with a site-to-site VPN using Remote Desktop," says DeArmond. "We did some troubleshooting on our end then passed it on to Uplevel. They immediately started digging to find the root cause. In a short time we had the issue fixed and everything ran perfectly after that. It was a huge difference from our experience with other vendors."

> ## "Everything just worked..."
>
> *David DeArmond*

Strix LA Benefits	Customer Benefits
• No upfront investment	• No upfront investment; install costs bundled into monthly subscription
• Promotes MSP model, recurring service revenues	• Faster, easier install
• Fast, easy remote configuration	• Worked as advertised out of the box

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