

Eliminating the Dreaded Blue Screen of Death from the Recovery Process; Interview with StorageCraft's Chief Evangelist Matt Urmston, Part 1

The one screen that no system admin ever wants to see is the dreaded blue screen of death (BSOD), especially when doing a recovery. Yet when recovering an application on a different hardware platform, BSODs become a distinct possibility. In this first installment of DCIG's executive interview with StorageCraft's Chief Evangelist, Matt Urmston, he explains the features that ShadowProtect offers to minimize or even eliminate the possibility of users encountering BSODs when conducting a recovery.

Charley: *Tell me about your background and position and ShadowProtect.*

Matt: I'm Matt Urmston, and I've been with [StorageCraft](#) for six years. I've spent 20 years in IT and the bulk of that has been in HA, Archiving, and Backup and DR. I currently play a dual role at StorageCraft, I'm both the Chief Evangelist and Director of Product Management.

Charley: *When did StorageCraft start?*

Matt: The Company was founded in December 2003. For the first four or five years we funded the company through our OEM arrangements with other folks, basically licensing them our technology so they could create their own backup and disaster recovery solutions.

We are proud that StorageCraft continues to be completely self-funded, continues to be profitable.

Charley: How has StorageCraft moved away from being a point product?

Matt: StorageCraft was very development driven in its early days. The CTO and current director of development were “The Guys.” The two of them, along with one or two other developers, pretty much developed [ShadowProtect](#) around a technology that they had OEM’d at a previous company. ShadowProtect is an image-based backup product that does a really good job of capturing systems in a stable state. It integrates really well on Windows systems into their VSS framework to make sure that when we’re capturing those snapshots, that they are in a very clean, stable state, which lends itself well to a reliable restore.

One of the things that the founders wanted to focus on, and that they had noticed in the industry, was that performing the restore was often a very painful and time consuming process, especially when restoring from tape. Companies had to gather all their tapes and catalog all of the data before even starting the restore process. In a lot of cases that tape was not very reliable, so companies lost data at the time of restore.

Early Focus on Rapid Reliable Recovery and Hardware Independent Restore

The focus in the development of ShadowProtect was really on the recovery. We wanted to make sure that when it came time to recover, it was going to be able to do so reliably and successfully and in a timely fashion.

Our focus was on getting rid of that backup window and providing the ability to run backups continuously throughout the day by capturing changes as they occur. This allowed those backups to be taken as frequently as every 15 minutes, then

once snapshots were taken, we wanted to give users the ability to quickly do restores.

Part of the recovery goal that StorageCraft set out to accomplish was to give end users the flexibility to recover to any hardware, not just the exact same hardware that the system was running on.

We went to market as a very stable “*hardware independent restore.*” Customers could take the backup images they had created and restore them to disparate hardware, including going from a physical system to a virtual system or even from one hypervisor to another.

With ShadowProtect, it really does not matter where recovery takes place. ShadowProtect takes images from one system and drops them on another. Our technology makes sure all of the necessary drivers are in place at boot up time so that the system does not blue screen and force the customer to do additional work to get it up and running. ShadowProtect takes care of all of that for them.

The Move from Recovery Product to DR Solution

StorageCraft went to market and quickly realized that if it was going to grow as a company, it would have to move away from just being selling a backup and recovery product and move to providing a disaster recovery (DR) solution—the [StorageCraft® Recover-Ability™](#) solution

To do so, we introduced a product called [ImageManager](#). ImageManager’s role, first and foremost, is to manage the incremental chain and to verify images, protecting the integrity of the backup images created by ShadowProtect. Additionally, ImageManager provides the replication technologies that take those images, replicate them offsite, and create a remote DR location. Now in the event of a site disaster, an organization can use ShadowProtect to spin machines up at a remote site and provide for that true

disaster recovery.

In part II of this interview series, we expand on how StorageCraft uses ImageManager to provide a full DR solution that can offer rapid recovery in less than five minutes, and also how ShadowProtect performs equally well whether it's placed in a physical or virtual environment.