

**For The 6th Straight Year, Thousands Of
IT VARs, Integrators, ISVs, and MSPs Rate Their Favorite Vendors**

Business Solutions

Growth Strategies For The IT Channel



**THE RESULTS ARE IN FOR OUR
SPECIAL REPORT ON THE CHANNEL!**

*The largest and
most respected
channel survey!*

SPECIAL REPORT Best Channel Vendors 2014

Survey Methodology & FAQ

How were the Best Channel Vendors survey and special report generated? For a sixth consecutive year we relied on the wisdom and experience of Penn State University to help ensure the survey's statistical accuracy. Penn State agreed with our philosophy of conducting a Web-based survey (as opposed to a phone-solicitation survey) of our subscribers to capture

significant data from our most active resellers. The technology categories were determined by the *Business Solutions* magazine (BSM) editorial staff.

Who participated in the survey? How did they vote? From September 2013 to mid-October 2013, BSM VAR subscribers

were asked to participate in the Best Channel Vendors survey. We asked subscribers to rate their vendor partners on a scale of 0 (worst) to 5 (best) in seven categories. We also provided some guiding questions to ensure consistency in how VARs interpreted each category:

- **Service/Support:** Do you have positive working relationships with their staff? Does their staff respond to your requests adequately? Do they fix your product issues quickly? Are they easy to do business with?
- **Channel Friendly:** Are they loyal to you and their other channel partners? Do they avoid competing with you, not unfairly selling direct? Do they push business toward you, instead of quoting prices to end users?
- **Channel Program:** Are you satisfied with the variety and quality of services they offer (e.g. reduced shipping, marketing funds, VAR rebates, lead generation, etc.)? Do they effectively and consistently communicate program changes?
- **Product Features:** Do their products meet your functionality needs? Is their product breadth adequate?
- **Product Reliability:** Do their products meet your quality needs? Do you frequently need to fix their products?
- **Product Innovation:** Do they update and adapt their products appropriately? Do they offer you new products to enhance your future growth opportunities?
- **Adequate VAR Margins:** Are their products priced fairly so you can make an adequate profit reselling and servicing them?

How many VARs participated? Did you throw away any votes? Nearly 2,508 people participated in this year's survey; we eliminated ballots that did not qualify as resellers. A total of 4,680 votes were cast in the survey.

How were the Best Channel Vendors determined? An overall average score for each vendor was determined by adding the cumulative scores of the seven cat-

Your blueprint for

GROWTH

Grow your MSP/IT support business in 2014!

For our 8,500+ customers, success comes in all sizes...from hungry IT Provider start-ups to large MSPs...they are all growing with MAX.

- » Build recurring revenues
- » Attract new customers
- » Provide great IT support
- » Cut costs

30-DAY FREE TRIAL
www.gfimax.com/bsm

GFI MAX Remote Management™

Tel: 1 (888) 243-4329 | Email: gfimax@gfi.com



SPECIAL REPORT Best Channel Vendors 2014

Survey Methodology & FAQ (continued)

egories and dividing that score by the number of VAR subscribers who rated that product. From that list, our editorial staff chose the Best Channel Vendors by applying a "Scree Test." We won't go into the full definition here — we'll leave that to the Penn State statisticians to explain — but basically our editors applied reasonableness to the results and drew the line where there was a clear break between the highest scorers and the "rest of the pack." Our goal was to reflect the sense of the survey respondents and let our readership know who they felt were the Best Channel Vendors. Those familiar with our past Best Channel Vendors surveys might remember that our previous results included the top 15 percent of vendors in each technology category. After consideration of feedback we received from readers, we tightened the grading criteria and chose the top 5 percent of channel vendors in each category for 2013.

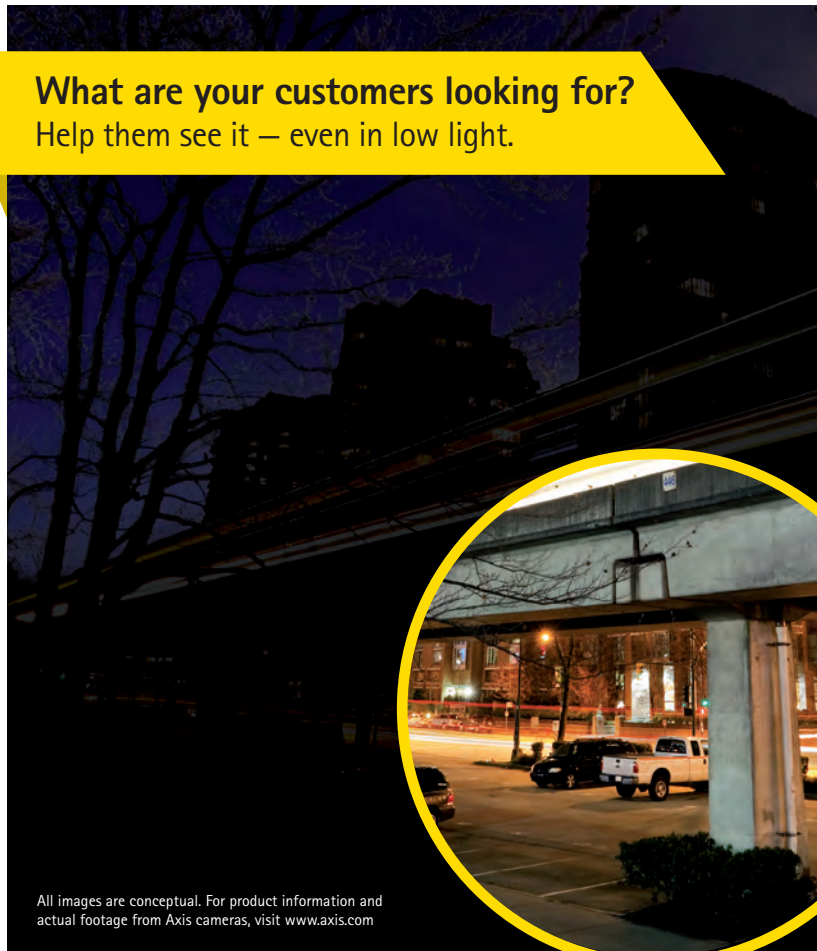
How are the Best Channel Vendors listed? They are listed first by technology category (BDR through VoIP) and then by technology subcategory. Best Channel Vendors are listed in alphabetical order. We did not rank them according to their overall average score. One of the main purposes of this special report is to give our resellers a guide to who their peers think are Best Channel Vendors. Ranking vendors according to their overall average score would mislead readers and defeat that purpose.

Did you "fudge" any scores to make sure your advertisers were included on the list? Did any vendors buy their way onto the list? No. Other magazines have skewed their surveys to include current advertisers or entice new advertisers. We believe engaging in that behavior is not only a disservice to the industry, but also it's dishonest. We would not compromise the reputation our magazine has built over the past 27 years for the extra revenue a few ads would generate.

Okay, so the survey is accurate. But is it perfect? Certainly not. Penn State's statisticians stressed to us that all surveys have their limitations. So, this survey is not perfect, but it should be an excellent tool for the channel because it indicates products and vendors that have highly satisfied VARs.

What should I do if I have a comment about this special report? Please call BSM Editor-in-Chief Mike Monocello at (814) 897-9000 x221, or drop him an email at mike.monocello@bsminfo.com.

What are your customers looking for?
Help them see it — even in low light.



All images are conceptual. For product information and actual footage from Axis cameras, visit www.axis.com

Image quality is always important, but the benefits are really determined by how your customers will use the images. We make their and your job easier, by focusing on image usability first. Help your customers utilize our joint competence and our comprehensive range of image features such as HDTV, Wide Dynamic Range and Lightfinder. As the world leader in network video, we help you ensure that your customers always get video they can use — no matter what the conditions are.



Visit www.axis.com/imageusability



**SATO****DON'T
Blend
In**

tired of **hunting** for the perfect solution?



STAND OUT with Retail Solutions from SATO

Demand the BEST for your retail environment with SATO's LP 100R high volume tag and label printer.

- Print up to 188k superior tags/hour
- Cut & stack tags and labels
- Lower your T.C.O. today!



Booth #3963
NRF | Jan 13-14, 2014

www.satoamerica.com/laser

SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014







EDITOR'S NOTES

A key piece of every managed services provider's offering is a backup and disaster recovery (BDR) solution. If you're new to the managed services game, know that the Best Channel Vendors listed below were the top survey performers out of 78 vendors.

The data collection market saw further consolidation in 2013, reducing the number of options for VARs reselling such technologies. Still, reports from survey takers are that such consolidation has, in many cases, had a cumulative positive effect on the companies left standing. For the second straight year, Best Channel Vendor winners selected out of 38 companies received highest marks in the categories of product features and reliability.




Backup & Disaster Recovery (BDR)

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Axcient www.axcient.com				✓	✓		
	Datto www.dattobackup.com		✓			✓		
	Intronis www.intronis.com	✓	✓					
	Unitrends www.unitrends.com			✓		✓		

Data Collection/Mobility

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Datamax-O'Neil www.datamax-oneil.com				✓	✓		
	Honeywell Scanning & Mobility www.honeywellaidc.com				✓		✓	
	Intermec www.intermec.com				✓	✓		

continued on next page

We Did It Again.



Thanks to all the VARs and MSPs who voted for Datto, again!
Winning "Best Channel Vendor" helps confirm that we're delivering the technology, solutions and support that help drive the financial growth of our Partners.



Find out for yourself what makes Datto a "Best Channel Vendor."

Call for a demo today: 888-294-6312

SPECIAL REPORT
Best Channel Vendors
2014



Data Collection/Mobility (Cont.)

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	SATO America www.satoamerica.com	✓				✓		
	Zebra Technologies www.zebra.com				✓	✓		



Labeling Software

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Niceware www.nicewareintl.com				✓		✓	
	Seagull Scientific www.bartenderbarcodesoftware.com				✓	✓		



ECM Hardware

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Canon U.S.A. www.usa.canon.com		✓			✓		
	Fujitsu Computer Products www.fujitsu.com				✓	✓		

ECM Software

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	docSTAR www.docstar.com	✓	✓					
	Hyland Software www.hyland.com		✓		✓			



THANK YOU TO OUR MOST IMPORTANT CUSTOMERS.

Sterling is committed to your success. In 2014, we will continue to provide you with the tools you need to grow your business: integrated payment solutions, superior sales support, high residuals, and the industry's fairest, most transparent profit-sharing program.

Partner with Sterling, a market leader in combining the latest POS technologies with value-added benefits to provide solutions such as mobile payments, cloud-based sales reporting, turnkey loyalty programs, and unique financing products for POS purchases.

LEARN HOW JOINING STERLING'S PARTNER PROGRAM
WILL BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR CUSTOMERS.

Call 800-591-6098 or visit www.sterlingpayment.com/pos_resellers



STERLING

Payment Technologies

innovations in payments™

SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014








EDITOR'S NOTES

Cisco, HP, Intel, Lenovo, Tripp Lite, and VMware made the Best Channel Vendor winners' list once again. Interestingly, survey takers scored the Best Channel Vendors for general computing and networking highest in the category of product reliability. The second-highest score for each winner varied.

The general computing field was made up of 51 companies, and due to tied scores, 5 winners earned a Best Channel Vendor distinction. The networking category contained 45 companies, with 3 earning higher scores than the rest of the field.




General Computing

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Hewlett-Packard www.hp.com	✓				✓		
	Intel www.intel.com	✓				✓		
	Lenovo www.lenovo.com					✓	✓	
	Samsung www.samsung.com	✓					✓	
	Tripp Lite www.tripplite.com		✓			✓		

Networking

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Cisco www.cisco.com				✓	✓		
	IBM www.ibm.com					✓	✓	
	VMware www.vmware.com				✓	✓		

SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014

EDITOR'S NOTES



I thought last year was an exciting year for retail and hospitality VARs. Twelve months ago, I wrote, "Pressure from consumer-grade devices such as iPads, along with increased competition from the payment processing space, is forcing many VARs to reevaluate their sales strategy." Those words resonate even more today.

Indeed, if your company was somehow immune to such market drivers in 2013, consider yourself lucky and in the minority. One side effect of market instability has been a banding together of long-established VARs, vendors, distributors, and associations such as the RSPA (Retail Solutions Providers Association).

As such, this year's Best Channel Vendor survey saw extremely high activity in the category of POS hardware. The survey included 77 vendors, and voting was fierce. Indeed, many companies had fantastic scores if compared with vendors survey-wide, but within the category of POS hardware, six (including one tie) scored high enough to make our list. Interestingly, based on the highest-scoring categories of all the POS hardware winners, it doesn't

appear as if the voters in this space were focused on any particular category this year. In years past, and with other technologies, we've seen voters give highest marks often in the categories of product features and product reliability. One final item worth noting is that Touch Dynamic is one of only two winning companies survey-wide to have one of its highest scores be in the category of channel program.

POS Hardware

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	CRS www.crs-usa.com	✓				✓		
	M-S Cash Drawer www.ms cashdrawer.com	✓	✓					
	Posiflex www.posiflexusa.com	✓					✓	
	POS-X www.pos-x.com		✓		✓			
	Star Micronics www.starmicronics.com		✓			✓		
	Touch Dynamic www.touchdynamic.com			✓	✓			

SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014

EDITOR'S NOTES






This was the first year we expanded the POS software category to include some of the new cloud/mobile/tablet software options that have been flooding the market. Whether due to lack of channel adoption or acceptance at this point, none of the vendors scored high enough to make the Best Channel Vendors list. NCC and Specialized Business Solutions were repeat winners this year, with Focus POS Systems joining the list. All 3 vendors (out of a total field of 56) had high scores in the channel friendly category, which should serve as notice to the many tablet providers who straddle the line between direct sales and channel.

The payment processing category included 69 vendors on the survey, with 3 earning Best Channel Vendor status due to high enough scores.




POS Software

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Focus POS Systems www.focuspos.com		✓			✓		
	National Computer Corp. www.nccusa.com	✓	✓					
	Specialized Business Solutions www.keystrokepos.com		✓			✓		

Payment Processing

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Element Payment Services www.elementps.com	✓				✓		
	Mercury www.mercurypay.com	✓	✓					
	Sterling Payment Technologies www.sterlingpayment.com	✓			✓			

There's a New Perspective on Payment Processing

The competitive differentiation lies in Element's innovation, technical expertise and vision that **transforms** how payments are secured in a simplified way.

Introducing the Element TransForm™ Approach to PCI Compliant Payment Processing

Element has always been committed to simplifying payments and data security for our ISV and merchant customers. As payment processing has become more regulated and complex, that commitment has resulted in a **new and innovative approach** to payment processing we call Element TransForm™.

Element TransForm™ is built on a simple idea—remove the value and accessibility of cardholder data and eliminate the risk. Leveraging advanced point-to-point encryption and tokenization, our suite of payment solutions transform how payments are secured in a simplified way—delivering optimal security that not only meets, but exceeds PCI compliance requirements. The cost, effort and risk associated with achieving and maintaining compliance is dramatically reduced or entirely removed; enabling you to focus on growing your business. And, Element TransForm™ solutions were purpose-built for an evolving industry with a service-oriented architecture and open standards that make them amazingly simple to integrate and use.



Get a New Perspective on Payment Solutions

Learn the benefits that Element TransForm™ can bring to your business and your comprehensive data security strategy.

Contact us today at [1.866.435.3636 x1764](tel:1.866.435.3636) | www.elementps.com



SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014

EDITOR'S NOTES





Nothing shocking about the PSA category. Autotask and ConnectWise have been tops in the automation category since we've been running this survey. Having been to both of the companies' partner conferences, it appears as if both companies have raving fans, and if you're thinking about upgrading your business to the as-a-Service model and need automation tools, you're safe going with either product.

In the Remote Monitoring and Management (RMM) category, 3 companies out of 21 scored high enough to be called Best Channel Vendors. Despite all the acquisitions in 2013, most survey takers agree that the joining of companies has had a positive net effect on the companies left standing. Great news for MSPs looking for strong vendor partners.




PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AUTOMATION (PSA)

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Autotask www.autotask.com		✓			✓		
	ConnectWise www.connectwise.com				✓		✓	

REMOTE MONITORING & MANAGEMENT

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Continuum www.continuum.net					✓		✓
	GFI MAX www.gfimax.com		✓					✓
	N-able by Solarwinds www.n-able.com		✓					✓

SPECIAL REPORT

Best Channel Vendors 2014

EDITOR'S NOTES






Network convergence means VARs today have more devices than ever to sell to customers. Networking VARs in particular who have strong IT infrastructure experience are well equipped to sell and install technologies such as access control, video surveillance, and VoIP.

In the physical security category, 119 companies were in the survey, with 3 scoring high enough to be deemed Best Channel Vendors. Axis Communications was a repeat winner this year.

In the VoIP category, 45 companies were included in the survey. Allworx was a repeat winner, and Avaya also scored high enough to take home the honor of Best Channel Vendor.



Video Surveillance & Access Control

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Axis Communications www.axis.com	✓			✓			
	Honeywell www.honeywellsecurity.com		✓			✓		
	Panasonic www.panasonic.com					✓		✓

VoIP

Each Winning Vendor's Top Two Categories

		Service & Support	Channel Friendly	Channel Program	Product Features	Product Reliability	Product Innovation	Adequate Margins
	Allworx www.allworx.com	✓	✓					
	Avaya www.avaya.com				✓	✓		