ROUNDSTONE SOLUTIONS INC.
CIO BRIEF
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Your Role as CIO

Your job is not easy; technology change is accelerating, and can be the difference between your company moving forward or falling behind. Executive management needs to know you and your team are not only keeping pace, but are deploying appropriate technologies that make the business more successful. It's a tough job.

As a Solutions Provider/VAR (call us whichever you like), we often work for people that are more directly involved in the day-to-day technology deployment and operations. These people work for you, in most cases. We work very well at this level, and have excellent relationships with our Clients, as you would expect.

However, there are times when the folks who work for the CIO aren't that interested in looking at newer technology platforms. We get it; no one wants to introduce change just for the sake of change. But, there are new technologies coming along every day that could really mean measureable difference for your company. So, how do you make sure your team is vetting them?

We decided awhile back we wanted to be a company that could be counted on to introduce newer technology platforms to our Clients. It's through these new platforms meaningful change and improvement are possible, and that's what IT is supposed to be about; fulfilling and enabling corporate growth objectives.

We realize you, as CIO, probably don't spend a lot of time talking to vendors and VARs. You have people for that. We just want to make sure you're getting exposed to technologies, that while different than what you may be using today, are worth taking a hard look at. We want to help you be successful in your role.

How we like to work with our Clients

For too long, VARs and manufacturers have assumed you're interested in every incremental change and new feature they care to introduce. We know that to be somewhat incorrect; you only care about changes and features that provide

business value to you and help you advance towards your business objectives. It's not technology that matters most; it's how it enables what you and your company are looking to accomplish.

Rather than focus first on technology, we try and get an understanding of what our Clients are trying to accomplish. Sure, we know technology well, but unless we know how the technology can be used to help get you to your business goals, there won't be enough real value to distinguish us.

Before we have our first meeting, we'll try and learn as much as we can about your company. We'll try and see if any of our vendors can offer information, as well as talk to our existing Clients who may know someone at your company. We do our homework.

We ask a lot of questions. We want to understand what you're trying to do, and we'll be able to talk about ways to use technology to accomplish this. We understand you and your team are very knowledgeable about technology already, but since we're involved with many different companies, we might be able to share ideas others have had success with.

In our first meeting, we're looking to do two things; 1) learn everything we can about your business objectives and IT Infrastructure plans, and 2) demonstrate to you our competence.

We like for you and your team to get to know us, and to do that, we prefer face-to-face meetings whenever possible. We're not just an email address or voice on the phone. We're accountable, in person.

In short, our Clients like working this way, and we think you and your team might like it, too. We hope to get that chance.

<u>Short discussion about "The Cloud"</u>
All of us have been hearing about the Cloud for a long time, and I think we would all agree it has changed the way we look at IT infrastructures.

The Cloud is really about creating an infrastructure you and your team can use to quickly and safely deploy applications. We no longer measure time to deployment by months; we now measure it in minutes. Public Cloud providers like Amazon Web Services (AWS), Azure, Google, and others have done a nice job of showing fast deployment, and it works well. For some workloads, using these Public Cloud services makes great sense.

Still, for many reasons, a Private Cloud is preferable. You may have compliance issues, security, latency challenges, or privacy issues that prevent some workloads from being able to use the Public Cloud.

We've been hearing from some Clients costs in the Public Cloud are much higher than expected, and getting applications and data into and out of the Public cloud is more difficult than it should be.

We believe both Public and Private Clouds make sense, which, as you know, is the hybrid Cloud.

Making the Private Cloud as easy to use as the Public Cloud is what many are wrestling with. Some are looking at OpenStack as the solution for the Private Cloud, but that still requires a tremendous amount of coordination, automation, and people to keep it working like the Public Cloud.

There are some technologies that exist to make the Private Cloud operate as simply as the Public Cloud, at a lower price point. Let's look at one: hyper-convergence.

Hyper-Converged Infrastructure (HCI)
HCI has been around for about 7 years, and it works very well. Every day seems to bring another company touting their HCI solution, yet most of these are really just repackaging of existing technology. Not truly HCI.

One of our partners, Nutanix, has done an excellent job defining the HCI platform, and moving it forward to where it is the standard for Private Cloud. When we first started talking with Clients about HCI and Nutanix, it was a hard sell, because the technology operations guys were familiar with a 3-tier architecture, and HCI was viewed as too disruptive. Not anymore.

HCI is mainstream, and runs almost every major application. Nutanix's platform gives you and your team complete choice, in hardware platform, hypervisor, where to deploy applications and how to pay for it.

If this were 2010, we'd understand a go-slow approach, but that's not the case in 2017. The platform is delivering on its promises, and as we move to the hybrid Cloud, it's how you're going to get a Public Cloud like experience in your own data center.

Nutanix has over 6,100 customers, and their platform has been deployed at hundreds of companies in Northern CA. It's simple, easy to operate, allows for agility, and is less expensive than a 3-tier architecture.

It's well worth doing a deep dive on Nutanix. You're going to like it, and we can help.

All Flash Storage

Every story about data storage these days speaks to the need to deploy All Flash Arrays (AFA). We don't think the performance of Flash is a requirement of most applications, but assuming the price is right, why not consider it?

Pure Storage has done a terrific job of defining the market and marketing the heck out of their platform. Hats off to them. Just like Nimble did for the hybrid storage market.

There's now a competitor to Pure Storage; Kaminario. Kaminario gives you more flexibility to scale up or out, and does so at a lower price point. Now that the market has been defined, many large companies in the Bay area are taking a serious look at AFAs, and many are deploying Kaminario. They are worth a look.

Security

The recent WannaCry ransomware outbreak has turned everyone's attention to security, which is good. What's been reinforced is the need to keep systems updated with the latest security patches, at a minimum. Common sense, but many hadn't done it.

Security experts will tell you the biggest threats come from innocuous incidents by employees, like using an infected USB drive, downloading an attachment from an email, or logging into a Wi-Fi network that is unsecure.

Security isn't just about anti-virus software on your endpoints. It's also about identifying, monitoring, and removing what's already been able to get into your systems. There are a few companies that offer this function, and one of them is our partner, Cybereason.

Cybereason was founded by security experts from the Israeli Defense Force (many security companies have been similarly founded) and well as US government security guys. They offer both endpoint security and advanced monitoring of your systems to find the malops that have already gotten in.

It's worth an hour to hear what they do and how they do it.

Simplify your Communications
Have you ever added up all that is spent on your various communications approaches? I've asked this of many companies we speak with, and no one knows. That's alarming. But, when you think it through, it's understandable.

Companies spend money on line costs, phone equipment (PBX or UC system), licensing costs, hardware maintenance, collaboration software (like Webex, GoToMeeting, etc.), chat (like Slack and others), and video (like Zoom and others).

Depending on how old your phone systems are, you may be dealing with equipment failures, high maintenance costs, high employee costs, and simply a very tough environment to keep running.

There's a better way.

Take a look at Unified Communications as a Services (UCaaS). All of the costs mentioned above can be rolled into a monthly per-user cost. Additionally, you'll get significantly increased function in the UCaaS offering. You no longer need any hardware onsite, as it's all in the Cloud.

We work with Fuze, one of the big players in the industry. They tend to focus on the Enterprise part of the market, not smaller businesses. Let us introduce them.

Summary
We hope you've gotten some value out of this CIO brief. We trust you can see we have a very matter-of-fact approach to business, and know what we're talking about. We don't fake it; if we don't know about a specific technology, we'll tell you and suggest a company that does. No one can do it all. What we do, we do well.

We'll be following up with a phone call to see if we can meet, or if you can give us direction. You can follow us on Twitter at @TimRoundstone, where we post fact and commentary on a regular basis.

Thanks for reading, and we hope we get to work together.