

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

IT managers often find themselves in situations requiring exceptional management skills. We present a challenging scenario and ask three ITA readers how they'd handle it.

# Vendor breach brings up contract questions: What's IT's next move?

## The Scenario

IT manager Joe Johnstone was in his office speaking with Kevin, a company tech, when his phone rang. Joe ignored the call.

"Do you need to take that?" Kevin asked. Joe shook his head.

"It's just the people from Stratus Cloud again," Joe explained. "Our contract with them is coming up for renewal, but I haven't made a decision about what to do yet."

## Passing the blame

"I'm guessing that means you're still skeptical about Stratus' security since it had that breach, huh?" Kevin asked.

"Right," Joe said. "We're just lucky none of our data was lost, like a lot of

their other customers."

"I guess to be fair, they've been a solid cloud service provider up until now," Kevin said. "Plus, Stratus said the breach wasn't caused by its people or processes, right?"

"Supposedly, it was a contractor Stratus works with that had the security issue which led to the breach," Joe said. "But that doesn't really reassure me."

"I don't like the idea that our cloud vendor is leaving our data in the hands of a careless third-party," Joe added. "Now Stratus is trying hard to keep our business by offering us big discounts. But I still don't know if it's worth the risk or if we're better off finding a new vendor entirely."

If you were Joe, what would you do or say next – and why?

## Reader Responses

### 1 Simon Bailey, CIO, Portman Holdings, Atlanta

*What Simon would do:* My first step would be to get more information from Stratus about the nature and scope of the breach. Most likely though, unless it was a minor incident, the safest bet is not to leave our data at risk with this provider.

*Reason:* We need to consider other factors, like regulation requirements, that could negatively affect our company – even if it was the vendor that was breached.

### 2 Jeremy Malick, IT manager, Liberty National Bank, Kenton, OH

*What Jeremy would do:* Since Stratus has been a good provider in the past, I'd at least hear them out

about what happened. Specifically, I'd want to hear what steps they've taken to prevent similar breaches before making a final decision.

*Reason:* Building a business relationship with a vendor takes time so it's worth giving Stratus a chance rather than write it off immediately.

### 3 Lee Morgenstein, information systems manager, Benderson LLP, Fairfield, NJ

*What Lee would do:* The safest course of action is to drop the contract with Stratus, even if it might be costly in the short-run. Then, we can do more research into potential vendors' security track records to help prevent this issue from recurring.

*Reason:* Even if Stratus was a good provider in the past, we can't risk another breach down the road hurting our client reputation or data security.

## THE LIGHTER SIDE

### ■ Man 'deletes' his company to get more customers

It's tough for tech startups to make themselves stand out from rivals – but pretending you deleted your company probably isn't the best way.

That was Marco Marsala's strategy. The Italian owned a website-hosting company, and recently posted on a tech forum that he had accidentally deleted all his server and backup data with a bad line of code.

The story caught a lot of media attention until the forum's admins debunked the story as a hoax meant to get him free publicity.

No word yet on why Marsala thought pretending to be terrible at his job would be a good marketing ploy to beat out the competition.

*Info:* [tinyurl.com/delete442](http://tinyurl.com/delete442)

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### ■ Tool for analyzing passwords

Dashlane is a free password manager that has an easy-to-understand desktop interface, provides password analysis and even gives suggestions on how to create stronger passwords.

*Visit:* [dashlane.com](http://dashlane.com)

### ■ Test APIs for flaws

For an easy way to test and evaluate your application program interfaces (APIs), use Runscope. The web-based app can help you determine if APIs are working properly, and also offers monitoring functions.

*Visit:* [runscope.com](http://runscope.com)

### ■ Team building, leadership advice

Author and consultant Mark Sanborn gives advice for developing teams and leadership skills on his blog.

*Visit:* [marksanborn.com/blog](http://marksanborn.com/blog)