



# Astro Pak | Case Study

## Cleaning Up with Cloud Computing

### COMPANY PROFILE

Founded in 1959, Astro Pak began as a precision cleaning contractor servicing major missile manufacturers and other aerospace clients during the U.S.-Soviet space race. Today, more than half a century later, the company is a global leader in high-purity cleaning and passivation, a process that increases a surface's resistance to corrosion through the removal of iron. Designed especially for customers that require the highest-levels of cleanliness, these processes help cut contamination, reduce corrosion, lower maintenance requirements, and enable compliance with Food and Drug Administration requirements.

Guided by a vision of exceeding customer expectations to create a new standard of excellence, Astro Pak has worked relentlessly throughout its 54-year history to foster a strong culture of excellence, accountability, collaboration, and fun. The company's commitment to excellence in service has resulted in exponential growth spanning a variety of industries, such as biotechnology, pharmaceutical, food and beverage, aerospace and defense, semiconductor, medical, water, and wastewater. Doubling its business every 10 years, the company has grown operations to service clients across the U.S., Canada, South and Central Americas, Asia, and Europe.



### COMPANY

Astro Pak is the leading provider of passivation; precision, high purity, and chemical cleaning; and related metal surface treatment technology.

### OBJECTIVE

Simplify IT infrastructure and desktop management and provide business continuity and disaster recovery capabilities.

### SOLUTION DETAILS

Zumasys cloud computing platform, which leverages the latest server virtualization technologies from VMware, storage and replication from NetApp, and software licensing from Microsoft and Citrix.

### RESULTS

- ▶ Reduce downtime from days to seconds
- ▶ Ensure zero downtime and zero data loss in the event of a disaster
- ▶ Reduce per unit desktop costs from \$1,600 to \$300
- ▶ Cut monthly help desk support requirements by 70%—from 200 hours to 60 hours
- ▶ Grant employees anytime, anywhere access to data from any device

### THE OBJECTIVE

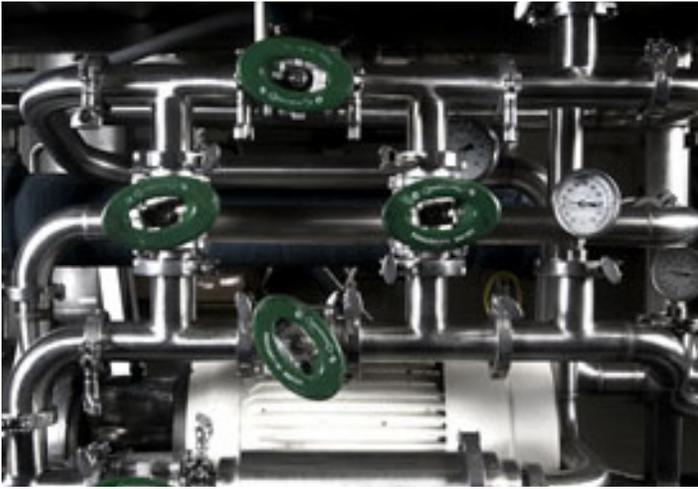
As a growing company in an extremely technical industry, Astro Pak depends on the availability of high-end IT systems. Of Astro Pak's 200 employees, only 14 are located in the corporate office in Costa Mesa, California. The other 186 employees work from home or one of nine global field offices. With business around the world, Astro Pak's employees rely on information systems for 24/7 remote and mobile access to the company's accounting, sales, and technical data.

To stay ahead of its competitors, Astro Pak must anticipate, plan for, and execute for growth so that nothing hampers its ability to deliver the excellent service its customers have come to expect. Astro Pak has always pursued a strategy of outsourcing IT services to vendors. With no in-house IT personnel, the company's success depends on having a technology partner that can deliver high levels of service and scale easily for growth.

In 2009, with Astro Pak's rapid growth and expanding global reach, the company was outgrowing its IT vendor and approaching the limits of its infrastructure. "It had become increasingly difficult to coordinate ten different offices worldwide and get users the information they needed," explains Erik Frankl, Senior Vice President of Strategy at Astro Pak.

A lack of centralized control over the company's computers was posing a number of challenges for the company. Every employee had his or her own laptop and desktop that connected to the corporate office using a virtual private network. Software upgrades were managed and supported on an individual basis, which bogged down the company's limited support resources. In addition to the management and licensing challenges, the devices and the data on them were vulnerable to theft, loss, malware, and viruses.

On top of that, the company had no backup, business continuity, or disaster recovery capabilities, which kept Frankl up at night. "We did a lot of praying. If California went down, every bit of data we had would go down with it."



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– **KEN VERHEYEN**, President & Owner, Astro Pak

Astro Pak started looking for a solution that could simplify the management of its IT infrastructure—particularly its desktop environment—while providing business continuity and disaster recovery capabilities. The company’s dependence on custom ERP systems, such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics Great Plains, added to the challenge. Any solution it selected would have to be built around these core business applications.

Astro Pak evaluated seven IT companies before deciding to move to Zumasys’ cloud computing platform. Other vendors were either too small to meet Astro Pak’s large support requirements or too big to provide the custom service the company required. Only Zumasys offered a solution built around Astro Pak’s custom ERP systems and could provide the flexibility and availability the company required to support future growth. “One of the big things for us was their responsiveness—their ability to accommodate a unique need that their other customers might not have,” explains Mark Coleman, Director of Information Systems at Astro Pak.

With no in-house IT department, it was also imperative that Astro Pak’s IT vendor could serve in an advisory role, working with Coleman to align IT to the goals of the business. The company needed a true partner in every sense of the word, and it felt confident that Zumasys could provide that. “They’ve got an amazing culture. They’re into charitable giving, and they receive awards annually for being a great place to work. That is important to us,” adds Coleman. “We want to make sure we partner with a company that is going to treat their employees and their customers well. If I come up with a last-minute request, they jump through hoops for us all the time.”

At the time, cloud was still an emerging technology, but Astro Pak was open to any solution that could meet its unique needs. “Being an early adopter of cloud services was a risk,” explains Ken Verheyen, President and Owner of Astro Pak, “But if you want to be the best, you have to innovate. The cloud is really the only way to effectively manage a growing, geographically diverse business like ours.”

## THE SOLUTION

After a lengthy vendor selection process, Astro Pak migrated its entire IT environment to Zumasys’ cloud computing platform, which brings together the latest server virtualization technologies from VMware; storage and replication from NetApp; and rental software licensing from Microsoft and Citrix.

Today, all of Astro Pak’s mission-critical applications, including its custom ERP systems, are hosted in the state-of-the-art Savvis data center in Irvine, California, and backed up to the SuperNAP data center in Las Vegas, Nevada.

VMware virtualization creates a shared pool of storage with more than 30 virtual servers. Eight load-balancing virtual servers running Citrix XenApp 6 optimize the performance of each virtual desktop and give employees the freedom to access their virtual desktops from an internet connection anywhere in the world, anytime, and on any device—desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone.

With Zumasys, Astro Pak has also moved from multiyear software licensing for Microsoft applications to a pay-per-use model. Zumasys’ Microsoft Service Provider License Agreement (SPLA) enables Astro Pak to add licenses instantly and pay per user, per month. The solution also includes a monthly contract for 60 hours of help desk support—a must for Astro Pak’s zero-person IT department.

## RESULTS

Today, Astro Pak measures downtime in seconds, rather than hours or days. Redundancy and instant failover provide zero downtime and zero data loss in the case of a failure. And should disaster strike at the Irvine data center, Astro Pak’s data is backed up daily to a second facility out of state.

“I don’t think I’ve thought about our IT support for months, because I take it for granted that it’s just going to work. It’s nice to have an IT partner that you trust like that.”

– **ERIK FRANKL**, Senior Vice President of Strategy, Astro Pak





Switching to virtual desktops has taken the headache out of deploying hardware for new users. “Now we don’t have to buy a \$1,600 laptop, I can buy a \$300 thin client. That’s been a huge cost benefit,” explains Coleman. In the past, Coleman would set up new computers for employees, installing all the necessary software himself before shipping out the computer. Now he simply installs the Citrix client and free antivirus software, and the computer is ready to go. “We can hire anyone in the world and have them running in minutes,” Coleman adds. “The biggest delay now is shipping time.”

Software updates and licensing are also easier. To deploy the latest software, Astro Pak no longer needs to contact each of its 200 employees individually. Zumasys installs the software once on the server overnight, and the next morning everyone has it in their Citrix environment.

Having every employee running the same versions of the same programs has eliminated compatibility issues that once plagued the company and a cut significant portion of the desktop support costs.

“Uniformity is a huge benefit. Each employee has exactly the same programs so there are no compatibility issues,” says Coleman, “Upgrades are super easy. We’re no longer dealing with CDs or license keys, and there’s no change in licensing cost.”

As a result, Astro Pak has cut its monthly help desk support requirements by 70%, going from 200 hours with its previous IT vendor to 60 hours with Zumasys. Best of all, Coleman no longer gets bogged down doing the day-in-day-out desktop support that he used to. He is now free to use his expertise to focus on higher-level initiatives and aligning IT to the goals of the business.

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– **KEN VERHEYEN**, President & Owner, Astro Pak

Having centralized control also gives Astro Pak increased security and greater control over its environment. With its previous IT solution, Astro Pak had no way to guarantee the retrieval of its proprietary data when employees left the company. Today, Astro Pak can turn employees on and off in an instant.

From its employee’s perspective, Astro Pak’s increased flexibility also extends to the workforce, which now has anytime, anywhere access to their data from any device. Astro Pak can equip its sales force with tablets and enable employees to work anywhere they have access to the internet.

Astro Pak has been so pleased with its partnership with Zumasys that it recently renewed its contract, signing on for another three years. The continued relationship between Astro Pak and Zumasys emphasizes the shared commitment to excellence that drives innovation and motivates success. According to Verheyen, “We post our values on our walls and on our Web site, but it’s important that we live them by partnering with other companies that also value leadership, high performance, and teamwork. Too many companies cut corners in an attempt to generate profits. When you hold to your values, prosperity comes. It’s not a means to the end, it actually is the end.” ■