

# Should You Build or Buy Your Next BDR?

A look at the pros and cons of building a custom BDR or buying from a vendor

*By Dave Doering*

A backup and disaster recovery system (or BDR) is a required component for a successful disaster recovery plan. However, the answers to such questions as *Should I buy or build?* and *What makes a good solution for me?* require some thought and consideration.

For example, many administrators and IT providers prefer a proven platform for their choice of solution. Others prefer to create a BDR system tailor-made to their needs for capacity and scalability, the level of complexity vs. operational overhead to manage it, and to match its cost closely to their budget.

Regardless of whether you choose to build or buy, a BDR appliance is a very effective (and profitable) way of delivering disaster recovery to clients.

## The quick scoop on selling BDR

Before we get to pros and cons, it's worth noting that a BDR device is an effective solution for DR if you're an IT admin, but it's also a great solution for VARs and MSPs to offer to an end client. The model for selling differs a little, but a BDR is still an excellent piece of equipment to include as part of an offering.

For more information on selling a BDR as a VAR or an MSP, check out our companion guide [Selling a BDR Appliance](#). If you're curious about how disaster recovery services can bring you recurring revenue as a provider, read our guide [Selling Disaster Recovery as a Service](#).

Now let's begin.



## Weighing Options

The pros and cons of building or buying fall in a few categories. We'll get to these categories in detail in a moment, but the table below is a basic breakdown.

VENDOR-BUILT BDR	CUSTOM BDR
Can rely on vendor expertise	Must rely largely on your own expertise
Hardware and software is confined to a few options	Flexibility in choice of hardware and software
Costs depend on BDR vendor	Costs can be tailored to specific budgets
Security features vary from solution to solution	Security features are up to your own abilities and imagination
Scalability with volume discounts	Volume discounts typically don't apply
Often meet various compliance requirements	May require special knowledge to ensure compliance
May or may not be upgradeable	Upgradeable
May be subscription-based	One-time cost for hardware and software licenses



## Expertise

BDR vendors have extensive experience with hardware to create their integrated offerings. They also have a full-time staff familiar with their products as well as backup and restore procedures. They can thus provide consulting support for designing and implementing both a BDR system as well as a disaster recovery plan. When choosing between buy or build, administrators need to ask: *What level of in-house expertise do I have to develop, deploy, and maintain a BDR system?*

Of course, there are options when it comes to building as well. For instance, StorageCraft can provide quick assistance if you need a push in the right direction while building a BDR or if you need an expert to look at what you've built when you're finished. This way, you get the advantages of best practices and expertise, while also having the benefit of a fully custom solution. See our [Professional Services page](#) for more information.

## Legal Compliance

BDR vendors are often familiar with the legal requirements to comply with HIPAA, SOX, and other legislation—both regional and national—for records retention and protection. Admins affected by codes and regulations such as these should ask: *Does this BDR comply with or compromise our current legal requirements?*

## Application Support

BDR vendors also have extensive experience with applications running on BDR systems. In particular, many

of them focus on the area of remote management and the StorageCraft line of products. This level of experience can be invaluable when integrating software and hardware in a reliable BDR unit. Admins should ask:

- Does this BDR integrate with my existing management tools (RMM, PSA, etc.)?
- What other operating systems, applications, or hypervisors does the unit support?
- Will this system support migrating my data to another system (cloud or local)?
- If the vendor created any software on the box, how well does it perform and how mature is the code?

## Service Level Agreements

BDR vendors offer several levels of service and support based on a client's needs in an SLA. These can maintain consistent and reliable backups using remote management for the duration of the contract. Admins should ask, though, if any third-party application or OS support is included in the SLA. Admins need to consider the added cost of contracting for such levels versus providing the internal resources to do their own monitoring and maintaining backups.

## Support

BDR vendors provide a support staff familiar with their products and software. However, when you have a custom-built BDR, one vendor provides hardware and one provides software, creating the potential for finger-pointing and delays in resolving issues.



Such delays are not welcome when it's time to restore data. Ask specifically what hours of support they provide for each type of SLA, what guarantees they have, and what method(s) of contact are available if you have trouble.

An in-house solution may have readily identifiable (and more importantly, more flexible) hours of support with known expertise and contact methods, which can make things much easier for your clients.

## Scalability

Since storage demands increase daily, admins need to ask the vendor if a unit is scalable. If it is, is it also field-upgradable? If the unit is scalable, to what degree can it be upgraded and with what technologies? Are the internal drives replaceable? Will the unit support upgrading to internal RAID, additional drives, or more RAM? Attaching an external subsystem? Many BDR offerings are standardized in just two or three configurations, limiting potential choices for a particular application, but a home-built BDR can be made to suit a much wider variety of applications.

For a custom-made BDR, ask yourself if you've considered scaling in the design. Again, to what degree is it scalable? What is the hardware capable of? Is there expertise internally to craft and maintain such a system?

## Security

When contracting with a vendor for supplying and maintaining a BDR, ask: what type of access to customer premises does this support require? What network access? What type(s) of security credentials are needed? How are personnel vetted for onsite activities?

If the vendor offers a cloud replication option, admins need to ask:

- Who has access to the data? Can an administrator at the remote site view, read, or copy data? How are personnel selected for these roles?
- What physical safeguards are in place?
- How secure is the transport mechanism to the remote site?
- In the event that the vendor is acquired or goes out of business, is there a transition plan ready to protect my data? More importantly, is there a plan for me to recover my data in either event?

A BDR crafted in house could use onsite staffers who are already screened and verifiable locally, which can make it easier to ensure a higher level of security and more control over access points.



## Cloud or Replication Site

BDR vendors may offer a cloud or replication option. They may offer volume pricing for transport and storage of data. Their system is also tailored for the job and integrated with their solution. Admins need to ask themselves if there are internal resources to craft and maintain such a data center-based cloud solution if this is a system requirement.

## Flexibility

As mentioned, BDR vendors often have only three or four standardized choices of hardware and software. A custom-designed system can instead have a much wider range of hardware and software that allows you to include management, and replication from the BDR. Also, a custom system provides full control over the restoration process where pre-built BDRs may have limitations.

## Budgeting

The limited selection of a BDR vendor's product line may not match well with your or a client's budget. A custom-made solution provides needed flexibility to closely match that budget. Software licenses, subscription fees, and SLA costs are also more adaptable in a tailored, rather than purchased, solution.

## Making a decision

A lot of things that hang in the balance when deciding whether to build or buy, but the bottom line is that the right decision really depends on what you or a client needs in a BDR unit. You definitely don't want something overbuilt for a client's needs because it can end up being cost-prohibitive. At the same time, you may find that pre-built options won't serve all of your clients.

Of course, it may be that you decide to build some BDRs and buy others in order to accommodate different clients' needs, while also providing you with favorable margins. Whatever the case may be, taking a time to carefully weigh your options will lead you to a decision that's successful for you and your clients.

If you need assistance making a decision, contact your StorageCraft channel account manager or email [partners@storagecraft.com](mailto:partners@storagecraft.com) to see which option is right for your business.



**Dave Doering** is a fifteen-year veteran in storage and senior writer at StorageCraft. Author of two textbooks on network administration, Dave is a frequent speaker at conferences as well as host of the popular podcast “It’s Never Boring with Dave Doering”.



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StorageCraft Technology Corporation  
380 Data Drive Suite 300  
Draper, UT 84020

[www.StorageCraft.com](http://www.StorageCraft.com)  
1.801.545.4700  
[contactus@storagecraft.com](mailto:contactus@storagecraft.com)