

## VENDOR PROFILE

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### Akibia Profile

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### IDC OPINION

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Akibia is an independent IT services provider that comprises three divisions: Data Center Solutions, Network and Security Solutions, and Outsourced Infrastructure Support Services. Akibia was founded in 1988 with a focus on providing multivendor maintenance and support services. In 2002, Akibia acquired the network and security systems integration division of Interliant. IDC believes that as a vendor-neutral services provider that is focused on specific infrastructure services, Akibia is positioned to be able to grow as new technologies continue to enter customers' datacenters. Specifically, we believe:

- Customers are interested in reducing the number of support and maintenance vendors they rely on for service without reducing the quality of service they have come to expect. As a third-party service provider that can support systems from multiple vendors, Akibia is positioned to take advantage of these opportunities.
  - As customers continue to invest in new technologies to improve IT infrastructure, they will require a trusted advisor to guide them in these investments. Examples of these technologies are virtualization and open source software.
  - To realize these growth opportunities, Akibia will need to overcome customers' reluctance to leave a hardware or software OEM. To do so, Akibia will need to be able to demonstrate deep technical knowledge of the customers' systems and IT environment.
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### IN THIS VENDOR PROFILE

This IDC Vendor Profile examines how Akibia is helping its enterprise and service provider customers achieve competitive advantage through a portfolio of services, including datacenter support and consulting, network and security consulting and integration services, IT education, and managed security services.

### SITUATION OVERVIEW

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#### Company Overview

Akibia was founded in 1988 as a multivendor systems maintenance provider. Akibia acquired the network and security systems integration division of Interliant in 2002 and now offers a full set of mission-critical datacenter and security services to help

Fortune 1000 organizations optimize, secure, manage, and support their IT environments. The company is now a \$100 million, global organization. Akibia has three divisions: Data Center Solutions, Network and Security Solutions, and Outsourced Infrastructure Support Services.

### ***Data Center Solutions***

The Data Center Solutions division provides consulting and integration, support, and education services.

### **Consulting and Integration**

Akibia's Data Center Solutions consulting and integration practice provides customers with services to assist in the assessment, planning, design, implementation, and support of their datacenters. Because Akibia is an independent services provider, its approach is vendor agnostic. Akibia's independent consultants assess each client's infrastructure and recommend solutions for virtualization, open source, and consolidation that fit the client's environment. In addition, many of Akibia's consulting services are designed to help its clients optimize their datacenter environment and maximize existing investments.

### **Support**

Akibia provides multivendor systems maintenance, proactive systems monitoring, datacenter relocations, and hardware procurement. Akibia's customized support solutions are designed to help companies increase the availability and performance of their multivendor Unix, Linux, and Windows environments. As a pure services company, Akibia is able to support the multivendor environment without the potential conflicts that can plague a traditional product company that also provides support services. Additionally, Akibia is able to offer its clients support for end-of-life systems from Sun, HP, Compaq, and Dell, enabling clients to delay hardware upgrades for systems that are performing well. Akibia's multivendor systems support is attractive to customers that want their datacenter supported by a single vendor, without the potential for the support services vendor trying to convert them to that vendor's platform.

Akibia's "Service Partner" approach to support allows the client to take advantage of its own skilled staff, while leveraging Akibia's experienced call center and best-in-class logistics and spare parts organization. Further, Akibia's customized service-level agreements (SLAs) allow customers to choose the right level of support for each system. Customers that take advantage of Akibia's Premium Support Service benefit from proactive maintenance and monitoring, asset inventory and management, and onsite dedicated support.

### **Education**

Akibia education and training courses are designed to provide tactical training that students can immediately apply in their work environment. Educators are active engineers and administrators who work regularly in the field. Akibia offers regularly scheduled courses throughout the United States and Europe as well as onsite at client locations. These courses focus on:

- ☒ Sun, HP, Compaq, and Dell hardware maintenance
- ☒ Solaris, HP-UX, SUSE Linux, and Red Hat Linux systems administration
- ☒ Storage area networks (SANs)

In addition to the defined courses Akibia offers, the company also provides customized training programs. For example, the company offers training programs aimed at technology organizations that need to:

- ☒ Deliver proprietary product/solution training to technical sales teams
- ☒ Provide training to field engineers on how to support their customer base

### ***Network and Security Solutions***

The Network and Security Solutions division provides consulting, systems integration, support, and education services.

#### **Consulting**

Akibia's Security Consulting Services help companies assess, plan, design, and implement security best practices by developing a security strategy and recommending and implementing solutions that enable customers to mitigate risk and achieve compliance requirements. Akibia delivers Security Consulting Services in the following areas:

- ☒ Vulnerability assessments and management
- ☒ Regulatory compliance
- ☒ Infrastructure consulting
- ☒ Security strategy and policy development

#### **Systems Integration**

Akibia has rapidly expanded its security capabilities across the United States and Europe. With strong partnerships with best-of-breed security technology providers and a team of experienced security consultants, Akibia is able to provide security systems integration services focused on the following areas:

- ☒ Security infrastructure — firewall and IPS design and implementation
- ☒ Identity and access management
- ☒ Secure messaging
- ☒ Network infrastructure
- ☒ Vulnerability management

## **Support**

Akibia offers support services around Check Point's full suite of security products and the Nokia IP platform:

- ☒ **Basic Support** helps clients diagnose, resolve, and manage their Check Point and Nokia security infrastructure issues during regular business hours.
- ☒ **Premium Support** provides clients with 24 x 7 access to Akibia's technical support center and incorporates guaranteed response times.
- ☒ **Monitored Firewall & VPN Service** provides 24 x 7 Monitored Support Service combining Premium Support with predictive monitoring, which provides clients with proactive alerts and updates regarding the availability and performance of their corporate firewalls and VPNs.
- ☒ **Managed Firewall & VPN Service** provides proactive monitoring and management of customers' firewall and VPN environment. This service is targeted at customers that want to outsource the management of their firewall and VPN infrastructure.

## **Education**

Akibia has authorized training centers for Check Point and Infoblox. Akibia offers the following regularly scheduled courses:

- ☒ Principles of Network Security
- ☒ Managing Multiple Sites with Provider-1 NG Edition
- ☒ Accelerated CCSE NGX
- ☒ Check Point Security Administration NGX I
- ☒ Check Point Security Administration NGX II
- ☒ Infoblox DNS/DHCP Fundamentals Workshop
- ☒ Infoblox NIOS Configuration Workshop

## ***Outsourced Infrastructure Support Services***

### **Call Center Support**

Akibia provides 24 x 7 call handling and technical support for proprietary hardware and software via call centers in the United States and Europe to clients that are interested in outsourcing some or all of their call center operations.

### **Logistics and Field Support**

Akibia provides logistic support for technology customers' field staff, enabling them to deliver support services to their end-user clients and meet their SLAs. Akibia does this by maintaining an effective and efficient spare parts bank network that the customer can utilize, rather than have to build themselves. Additionally, Akibia will

help companies install, diagnose, and repair proprietary products in the field with deployment and support services that supply engineers or professional service labor to meet specific needs.

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## **Company Strategy**

Akibia focuses on providing services to help organizations secure, optimize, manage, and support their IT environment. Akibia provides customers with a single point of contact for all their mission-critical datacenter and security needs. Its suite of services include multivendor systems maintenance, open source, virtualization, and datacenter consolidation solutions. Additionally, Akibia offers a full life cycle of network and security solutions, including planning, assessment, design, implementation, integration, and security infrastructure support.

Akibia competes with traditional outsourcers, product OEMs, and regional IT services firms. Akibia differentiates itself through its "Think like a Customer" service philosophy. Under this philosophy, Akibia personnel are focused on customer service and the customer experience. Akibia's strategy is to focus on the technologies and platforms in which it has deep technical expertise and provide positive customer service and engagements that result in long-term partnerships with its customers. Akibia's value to its clients is in its independent, vendor-agnostic, consultative approach to infrastructure services. As an independent services provider, Akibia delivers technology-based solutions for its clients — regardless of vendor.

### ***Akibia Strengths***

Akibia's strengths include:

- ☒ **Focus on service.** Akibia was founded as a services company, and the company's primary focus is to provide services. Akibia's service philosophy is premised on providing the best possible customer experience. The company's team is committed to helping its clients optimize their datacenter environment to get the most value from their existing infrastructure and build security strategies that mitigate risk and ensure compliance.
- ☒ **Proven methodology and best practices.** Akibia has 19 years of experience in the industry and experience built on engagements at some of the Fortune 100 companies. This translates to a collection of best practices, leveraging technology, people, processes, and policies.
- ☒ **Single point of contact for multiple platforms.** As an independent IT infrastructure services provider, Akibia can provide its customers with a single point of contact across multiple platforms, thus enabling customers to consolidate support vendors. While other platform vendors can offer similar services, they may not have the same dedicated focus that Akibia has. Because the service provider is not tied to product sales, Akibia and its clients have a common goal of getting the best performance out of existing systems.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK**

Customers are looking to minimize the number of service providers within their IT environment without losing quality of service. Akibia is suited to help solve a large portion of a company's IT infrastructure concerns, including datacenter optimization, network security, and system support.

As technology innovation continues at a rapid pace, customers need a trusted advisor to help them understand the truly innovative technologies and determine which emerging applications make the most sense for their business. Akibia's infrastructure consulting services will continue to grow as companies look to Akibia to help them implement the right technologies for their environment.

Specifically within the maintenance support services industry, customers are constantly looking for ways to reduce the cost associated with supporting their current IT infrastructure. As the migration to volume servers (servers with an ASP of less than \$25,000), and away from proprietary scalable servers, continues, one avenue open to customers to reduce support services spending is to use a third-party maintainer to provide support services. One of the challenges the third-party maintainer faces in these situations is demonstrating to the customer that it can provide the same level of service as, or a higher level of service than, the hardware OEM. Third parties can accomplish this by focusing on specific vertical industries, thus demonstrating deep knowledge of the customer's industry, or focusing on specific technologies, thus demonstrating deep technical knowledge.

To realize this growth within its datacenter support practice, Akibia will need to overcome some customers' reluctance to leave the hardware OEM. To do so, Akibia will need to demonstrate deep technical and industry knowledge. To date, Akibia has been able to do this by focusing on a select group of infrastructure services. If Akibia continues to demonstrate this level of knowledge and execute on its service agreements, then it will be able to continue to grow.

## **ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE**

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### **Advice for Akibia**

IDC expects continued growth of the use of a single point of contact for support services needs. IDC believes that this trend is driven by the customers' continued desire to reduce the cost of supporting their current IT infrastructure and dissatisfaction with the hardware or software vendors' support services. This is especially true in the infrastructure space, as opposed to software applications, where a third party can provide a level of services that is comparable to the vendor's. Akibia and other third parties stand to gain from this trend if they can demonstrate technical expertise and provide the level of support service that IT customers are looking for.

The challenge for the independent third parties is demonstrating their technical and industry expertise. While customers may be dissatisfied with the current hardware or software providers support, they are reluctant to change unless the third party can demonstrate that it understands the products and the industry that the customer

operates in. Akibia is approaching this by focusing on a breadth of infrastructure technologies and providing the highest levels of support and service available. Akibia also focuses on delivering customized and unique solutions to its end users, based on their individual needs and requirements. This level of customization ensures a better customer relationship. IDC believes in this strategy. However, for the strategy to be successful, IDC believes that Akibia will need to provide an exceptional customer experience. While this may sound easy, continuing to provide exceptional customer service is a challenging task. Customers generally do not have a considerable amount of patience when they have to contact a vendor for support. IDC recommends that to address these concerns, Akibia should continue to refine its remote support and preventative maintenance capabilities. Generally, customers that do not ever have downtime incidents are the most satisfied.

## LEARN MORE

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### Related Research

- ☒ *Worldwide Volume Server Support Services 2006–2010 Forecast* (IDC #203044, August 2006)
- ☒ *Worldwide and U.S. Hardware Support and Deploy Services 2006–2010 Forecast* (IDC #201882, June 2006)
- ☒ *Worldwide and U.S. Software Deploy and Support Services 2006–2010 Forecast* (IDC #201977, June 2006)
- ☒ *IDC's Worldwide Services Taxonomy, 2005* (IDC #32904, March 2005)

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