

From Vendor Dependency to Secure Automated Backup in One Week

CUSTOMER

Large Multi-Brand Retailer

INDUSTRY

Retail

SOLUTION

Cobalt Iron Compass

BENEFITS

Migrated backup operations
in 7 days

Stored data reduced by 77%

Simplified backup
management

Gained operational
autonomy

Executive Summary

This case study examines how a large multi-brand retailer operating an extensive portfolio of well-known consumer retail brands leveraged an intelligent backup solution with secure, automated backup capabilities to shift from vendor dependency to operational autonomy at unprecedented speed.

The company made the strategic decision to migrate backup operations from its global systems integrator (GSI) to its internal team. The challenge extended beyond selecting the right backup solution — it also required executing a rapid, disruption-free transition while enabling a newly autonomous team to manage the system without added burden. The chosen solution needed to deploy immediately, perform reliably from day one, and demand minimal management overhead.

In a remarkable achievement, the retailer deployed Cobalt Iron Compass® and migrated all critical backup operations in just seven days. Within that single week, the team completed over 8,600 successful backups protecting more than 162TB of data — efficiently compressed to 36.7TB through intelligent backup deduplication — while maintaining zero disruptions to production systems.

The Challenge: Racing Against the Clock

The retailer made the strategic decision to transition backup engineering, operations, and administration from its global systems integrator (GSI) to its internal IT team. This move aligned with the company's broader initiative to increase operational control, reduce dependency on external managed services providers, and build internal expertise around critical infrastructure.

The timing created immediate pressure. The company faced two immovable deadlines: the GSI contract expiration and an approaching change freeze period that would prevent any infrastructure modifications.

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“We cancelled our GSI contract before we had a new solution finalized. We could not have stood up a new environment in the time frame without Compass.”

The retailer's IBM Cloud environment presented significant challenges:

- **Multiple platforms:** AIX systems, Linux workloads, and diverse application architectures requiring platform-specific backup capabilities
- **Business-critical applications:** SAP HANA databases, Oracle databases, and core retail systems where data loss would have immediate business impact
- **IBM Cloud Power VS architecture:** Power Virtual Server environments lacking complete network connectivity to backup storage vaults
- **Legacy agents:** Outdated backup agent versions requiring updates during an already compressed timeline
- **Scale requirements:** Over 162TB of production data requiring enterprise-grade protection

If the retailer failed to implement a functioning multicloud backup solution before the GSI off-boarding and change freeze, the consequences would be severe: business-critical applications operating without backup protection, potential compliance violations, extended vulnerability through the entire change freeze period, and possible vendor lock-in under unfavorable contract terms.

Solution Evaluation: The Compass Advantage

Through the IBM Cloud team, the retailer learned about Cobalt Iron Compass, a SaaS-based intelligent backup solution, and its value was immediately apparent.

Unlike traditional backup software requiring weeks of infrastructure setup, Compass provisions directly from the IBM Cloud catalog with integrated billing. The SaaS delivery model eliminated procurement delays, hardware provisioning, and complex software installation.

The leader of the implementation team later reflected: “We cancelled our GSI contract before we had a new solution finalized. We could not have stood up a new environment in the time frame without Compass.”

The retailer ultimately selected Compass based on four key factors: proven IBM Cloud integration, intelligent automation, built-in cyber security, and simplified daily management.

- **Native IBM Cloud Integration:** Purpose-built for IBM Cloud environments, Compass integrates natively with Power Virtual Server, IBM Cloud Object Storage, IBM Cloud Block Storage, and the broader IBM Cloud ecosystem, eliminating integration friction.

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- **Automation-Focused Architecture:** Compass leverages analytics-driven automation to handle hundreds of backup tasks that normally require manual administration, including job scheduling optimization, storage management, capacity planning, policy enforcement, and performance tuning. This meant the retailer could operate enterprise-grade backup infrastructure with minimal team resources.
- **Comprehensive Cyber Resilience:** The solution incorporates security capabilities essential for a high-profile retailer. These include Zero Access[®] architecture, which eliminates direct login access to backup infrastructure; immutable backups, to preserve backup data against ransomware attacks; air-gapped protection, to isolate backup data from production networks; and encryption at rest and in transit.
- **Simplified Management:** A unified SaaS management console provides comprehensive visibility through intuitive dashboards, detailed analytics, and audit-ready reporting.

Unprecedented Results

The implementation delivered extraordinary outcomes. The retailer moved all critical backup operations in just one week. The IBM Cloud team collaborated on network enhancements to help set the stage. Then, over a seven-day period, the retailer went from vendor-dependent to self-sufficient.

- 8,600+ successful backups completed across the entire environment
- 162TB of production data protected with full coverage of business-critical applications
- 36.7TB stored after deduplication (77% storage efficiency reducing costs)
- Zero production disruptions

Three factors enabled this acceleration: SaaS delivery eliminating infrastructure delays, automation replacing manual configuration, and cloud-native architecture eliminating compatibility work.

Reliability and Confidence

During the critical first weeks, the retailer encountered only one minor network path compatibility issue, which was quickly resolved without business impact. The implementation team leader's assessment best captures the team's confidence: "We are very pleased with the support and assistance that Cobalt Iron provided. Compass validated the confidence my team had from day one."

Business Continuity

The one-week implementation meant the retailer entered its change freeze period with fully functional, validated backup protection. Business operations continued without interruption, regulatory compliance requirements were maintained, and risk exposure was eliminated.

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The retailer deployed Compass and migrated all critical backup operations in just seven days — that included completing over 8,600 successful backups protecting more than 162 TB of data — while maintaining zero disruptions to production systems.

Cost Efficiency

By achieving 77% storage efficiency through compression and deduplication, Compass generated immediate financial savings for the retailer. Rather than storing 162TB full size, the company pays IBM Cloud storage costs for only 36.7TB. This could reduce the retailer's monthly IBM Cloud storage expenses by over \$125,000 annually. The automation-focused architecture minimized the administrative burden on IT personnel, avoiding the need to hire additional backup administrators or extend expensive managed services contracts.

Strategic Cyber Resilience

With its Zero Access® architecture and immutable backup capabilities, Compass provides the retailer with robust protection against ransomware threats. By eliminating direct administrator access to backup data and enforcing immutable storage policies, Compass ensures that even if production systems are compromised, backup copies remain pristine and recoverable.

Conclusion: Redefining What's Possible

This implementation challenges conventional wisdom about enterprise backup deployments. A one-week migration protecting over 162TB of data with 8,600+ successful jobs demonstrates that modern, cloud-native approaches can deliver results orders of magnitude faster than traditional methods.

Several insights stand out. SaaS delivery transforms implementation economics by compressing timelines from months to days. Intelligent automation enables small teams to achieve enterprise-scale results.

For IT leaders evaluating data protection strategies, this retailer's experience offers compelling proof: with the right multicloud backup solution and secure automated backup capabilities, organizations can achieve operational autonomy, strengthen cyber resilience, and deliver business value at cloud speed — even under the most demanding timelines.

Rapid cloud-native backup implementation is possible. Now, the question is whether your organization will leverage these modern approaches to transform data protection from operational burden to strategic advantage.

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