

# We pioneered a new model of integrated services in the industry: **AST**

**I**n a market where companies are increasingly challenged to keep pace with competitive, social and regulatory challenges, key strategic partnerships that support and drive corporate objectives become critical components of the organizational structure. Aligning the central organization with resources focused on maintaining core functions, experienced in identifying and adapting to change and adept at navigating through challenges, provides a structure that allows a company to maintain its momentum while responding to and overcoming obstacles.

As a full-service, tech-enabled professional services firm, AST provides a strategic approach to every interaction to support and advise companies across North America in maintaining momentum throughout the corporate lifecycle. AST President and CEO Martin Flanigan reveals how.

## **A talk with Martin Flanigan, President and CEO**

### ***Can you tell us a bit about the evolution of the company?***

AST is an industry-leading capital markets service provider that delivers a comprehensive suite of services to support all phases of corporate growth and development.

AST was founded as a transfer agent in 1971. Through organic growth and strategic acquisitions, AST has established a new model of integrated services in the industry. Our affiliates now include AST Trust Company (Canada), D.F. King & Co., Inc., and Donlin, Recano & Company, Inc. Together, we lead the industry with a comprehensive portfolio that includes transfer agent and registry services, corporate governance and advisory services, issuer and mutual fund proxy services, equity plan solutions, restructuring services, and class action and mission-critical services.

Working together across specializations, we provide a level of integrated leadership that affords a deeper client relationship and allows us to more seamlessly anticipate client needs. Our clients benefit from a common platform and alignment of services that drives deeper knowledge of and greater insights into their overall ownership portfolio and strategy.

In alignment with client needs and anticipated market trends, AST subscribes to an ambitious strategy to continuously lead the industry in tech-enabled, transformative business solutions. Our most recent product release, Issuer Central™, provides clients with a revolutionary platform that presents comprehensive ownership information, empowering every corporation with the tools and actionable insights to achieve its

capitalization objectives. Providing secure and comprehensive intelligence through an innovative, intuitive platform allows AST and our clients to focus on corporate strategies to maintain momentum and achieve goals.

### ***What differentiates AST from its competitors in these areas?***

The AST business model aligns historically segmented services into a consolidated, integrated and tech-enabled professional services partnership with our clients. Every day, through every interaction, we help clients streamline mission-critical operations, increase efficiencies and reduce obstacles.

Our objective is to provide comprehensive, efficient, accurate and insightful services that help clients understand their full shareholder audience and support successful strategies. We understand the data behind the ownership, and the story behind a client's shareholders. Our focus is not only to continuously enhance data and reporting, but also to leverage analytics and insights to support successful client strategies.

With our new Issuer Central platform, AST leverages its wealth of transactional ownership data with a full spectrum of public filing data to generate a more complete view of ownership. The integrated view of ownership data helps clients understand their investors

and supports definition of growth opportunities. Top features include:

- Single view of registered shareholder and street (institutional) data
- Peer and historical ownership data
- Ability to view and search across all securities
- Information on proxy influencers
- World-class reporting and analytics
- Ability to create multiple user profiles customized for specific data needs
- Ability to identify opportunities and mitigate risks among shareholders
- Able to help mobilize an entire organization, enabling efficiency and teamwork by providing CEOs, CFOs, Corporate Secretaries, Investor Relations teams, CIOs, and HR access to the same rich data set with views customized to each audience's needs

***Can you document your industry leadership in a couple of these areas?***

AST has been a leader in transfer agent and registry services since 1971. Today we provide transfer agent services to over 3,000 issuers across North America. We manage approximately 40% of all US IPOs each year.

AST is also a leading provider of investor communications services in North America. D.F. King, an AST Company, is a dominant presence in corporate proxy and governance services, with more than 70 years of experience in the industry. AST Fund Solutions leads the market in mutual fund proxy solicitation and tabulation services. Donlin Recano has held a strong position as a top provider of bankruptcy and class action administration services.

We're proud to have a dominant market position in servicing thousands of high-growth, highly innovative companies. Clients choose AST because of our customer-centric, fully integrated solution that provides a complete view of the total shareholder audience, ownership intelligence and governance and advisory services.

This year, AST was recognized as a Top 10 Financial Reporting Solutions Provider by CFO Tech Outlook magazine. With the roll-out and extension of the Issuer Central platform, AST will continue to dominate the market and increase value for our clients.



Martin Flanigan, President & CEO

*“With our new Issuer Central platform, AST leverages its wealth of transactional ownership data with a full spectrum of public filing data to generate a more complete view of ownership.”*

***Does the company have any sort of breakthrough technology?***

### **Blockchain Proxy Voting Solution**

AST is preparing to launch a new proxy platform powered by blockchain technology that will further enhance our ability to process multiple large campaigns simultaneously. By leveraging blockchain technology, AST will increase the timeliness of accurate, auditable proxy vote tabulation and lay the groundwork for more efficient and immediate shareholder participation in corporate governance. Using blockchain-based transactional voting data, AST will provide corporate and mutual fund issuers with valuable and timely insights and trends throughout a proxy project that influence and inform campaign strategy and results.

The proxy solution is hosted on IBM's industry-leading blockchain cloud infrastructure and was developed in conjunction with blockchain specialist firm NuArca. It will go live at the end of 2018.

### **Issuer Central**

Late in March 2018, AST launched Issuer Central, an industry-first, on-demand analysis and intelligence platform that provides both registered shareholder and street (institutional) ownership data for C-suite teams in one consolidated interface.

The Issuer Central platform uniquely

aligns core functionalities—ownership intelligence, registry services, and in future updates, proxy and other share ownership related services—into a single online ownership portal. The platform consolidates registered and street shareholder positions to provide a uniquely comprehensive view of ownership not available anywhere else in the industry.

The platform processes ownership data and normalizes it to identify how strategic decisions, such as mergers and acquisitions, will be viewed by each shareholder. Issuer Central helps clients uncover business insights by analyzing and presenting each client's ownership profile based on regulatory requirements such as investor tax jurisdiction and various other factors unique to that client. Analyzing this data through Issuer Central equips clients with a dynamic, customized dashboard where any user can view critical information to plan for corporate audits, annual general meetings and other corporate actions.

***Culture is not a static thing; as the company evolves its culture also changes. Are you constantly re-evaluating your cultural tactics?***

Growth and change can be big disruptors to corporate culture. With our history of acquisition and continuous growth, there was a significant risk of cultural walls and siloed services developing. Recognizing and addressing the risk upfront was critical to the success and

synergy realization of each acquisition and extension of our corporate strategy. AST integration teams played an integral role in educating and demonstrating both the internal and competitive value of alignment of core competencies and extension of capabilities to all teams and stakeholders. This inclusive and cross-functional benefit analysis drove the support and coordination required to achieve the corporate objectives.

This cohesive approach has allowed AST to go to market with a uniquely comprehensive offering for clients. Our technology-enabled consultative model facilitates greater flexibility, teamwork, cooperation and cross-enterprise perspectives required to deliver the full spectrum of meaningful data and insights regarding a company's shareholder audience. In this, we continue to evolve to be better, more strategic partners to our clients.

***What is your company's commitment to the future?***

We will continue our commitment to cement AST's position as a leading provider of transformative, tech-driven solutions for the securities industry. Our mission is to be the preferred partner for technologically informed, client-centric capital market solutions. We will achieve this by continuing to enhance our current capabilities and platforms, and through strategic partnerships and new market opportunities to provide disruptive solutions that challenge the industry to achieve higher standards for clients and shareholders.

***“Every day, through every interaction, we help clients streamline mission-critical operations, increase efficiencies and reduce obstacles.”***