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Harnessing Technology to Generate Meaningful Ownership Data Information

AST

AST President of Issuer and Investor Services, Bob Carney, shares how extracting, analyzing and managing ownership data through innovative technology led to AST becoming a leading transfer agent and provider of ownership data management and analytics.

For the past 50 years, through organic growth and acquisitions, AST expanded its transfer agent business to meet clients' evolving needs. Its array of complementary corporate and shareholder services includes employee stock plan administration, proxy solicitation,

cap table management, bankruptcy claims administration, and shareholder communications and advisory services.

A strategic approach to every interaction throughout a company's lifecycle has positioned AST as a leading service provider to both public and private companies and mutual funds. AST's commitment to cutting-edge technologies, including data platforms that use blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) technology distinguishes us amongst our competitors.

Q: How do you help companies and shareholders?

Ownership data is central to what we do – from shareholder sentiment, proxy voting patterns, buy and sell trends.

When it comes to measuring and managing a company, it is critical to have comprehensive and unique ownership data and analytics. This information can lead to a more successful engagement, while also facilitating strategic decision-making.

Companies that proactively monitor their shareholders on an ongoing basis better understand how investors view them as an investment opportunity. It is more important than ever, to effectively engage shareholders due to increased shareholder activism.

For shareholders themselves, we provide tools to transact and update their accounts with AST. This includes the ability to purchase or sell shares, to enroll or un-enroll in dividend reinvestment programs, and to execute direct deposit of dividends.

AST also provides shareholders with a comprehensive summary of all their holdings. It is more important than ever, to effectively engage shareholders due to increased shareholder activism.

Q: How has AST distinguished itself in financial technology?

Issuer Central®, our on-demand analysis and intelligence platform, is powered by the expertise and robust data sets of industry-leaders AST and D.F. King & Co., Inc. (an AST company).

Issuer Central's unique ownership and shareholder behavior data provides a comprehensive view of ownership that is not available anywhere else in the industry.

By aligning core functionalities—like shareholder intelligence, registry services, and in future updates, proxy management and other share ownership-related services—into a single online ownership platform, it provides issuer clients a dynamic, customized dashboard through

which they can access the critical information needed when developing strategic initiatives or planning for a corporate audit, annual meeting, or other corporate actions.

Issuer clients can use Issuer Central's data analytics to answer common and important questions like, *“who owns my shares? do I comply with ownership regulations? what is important to both my retail and institutional investors? how can I more effectively engage them?”*

Deeper shareholder insights help a company understand how its actions impact its trading activity. Issuer Central insights include institutional cost basis and peer ownership that can help issuers understand what is driving their shareholders' decision to own, buy, sell or trade shares. It can also help a company build stronger relationships with its investors while maximizing its own marketplace performance.

Q: What are tangible benefits for issuers using Issuer Central?

An issuer client can pinpoint a specific shareholder to find out how they may react to certain business decisions based on past behavior or priorities. With this insight, an issuer client can tailor their engagement and communications strategy.

Issuer Central's results can be easily exported for inclusion in audit reports, annual meeting documents, and other internal reports. Also, all of Issuer Central's shareholder data and analysis are organized according to user type - by stock administrator, CFO,

investor relations officer, general counsel, corporate treasurer, etc. This ensures that the same data is being presented when making decisions that could impact the direction and growth of the company.

As Issuer Central provides an unmatched view of ownership, its features are especially beneficial to a private company after working with AST's IPO Services unit to go public. Thanks to our dedicated IPO transition team, as well as our service and support teams, we have executed almost half of all U.S. IPOs since 2010.

AST also has SPACs, direct listings and Regulation A exemptions expertise. For companies preparing to go public, our Astrella® product can help private companies manage their cap table data with *“at your fingertips”* waterfall/exit scenario reporting tools.

Issuer Central can also be paired with AST's deep bench of experienced professionals who are prepared to work with companies. Issuer Central supplements this by extracting, analyzing, processing and organizing unique data sets to provide issuer clients a comprehensive view of each shareholder's mindset.

Q: Tell us how bundling Equity Plan Solutions with Transfer Agent Services can help clients.

In the past, for some companies it made sense to have a separate equity plan administrator and transfer agent. Today, it may be costing companies more than they realize.

Our clients understand that technology is integral to every service we provide and that working with AST for all of their transfer agent and equity plan activities maximizes efficiencies.

Joint clients gain access to our team of dedicated EPS specialists, our full range of EPS administrative capabilities, and our transfer agent and registrar services. For transfer agent clients, this means a single platform for managing grants, reconciliations, daily reporting and proxies. It is also economical to be a joint client, as we waive Deposit/Withdrawal at Custodian (DWAC) fees.

At the shareholder level, our single-view platform offers the ability to access all holdings via a single login regardless of how many accounts or systems are being accessed on the backend.

Q: How does AST assist a transfer agent client involved in an escheatment process?

All public companies must address

abandoned property management; it is mandatory, time consuming and costly. There is often a great deal of money at stake and many complex and changeable laws in this area. AST's transfer agent team is here to help clients take steps to educate and protect themselves, both legally and as a matter of policy. State laws that govern the escheatment process change frequently, and corporations do not want to be made liable by underpaying or overpaying.

One surprising thing that companies, especially large corporations, need to know is that while unclaimed property may have initially referred to literal property belonging to a deceased person without heirs, its scope has expanded considerably over the years. It now includes unclaimed payroll checks, vendor checks, employee expense checks, stocks and dividends, etc. Some of this property may be escheated to the states simply due to lack of contact in as little as one year.

Many corporations don't realize that if their employees do not cash a paycheck or if a vendor

does not cash its payment, that property or money may be required by law to be turned over to the state.

Unclaimed property has morphed into an enormous revenue making opportunity for states and explains why an industry has emerged to manage the process on behalf of the states. These companies also offer services to ensure corporations are in compliance with ever-changing state laws.

To reduce time and expenditures for our issuer clients, our transfer agent business offers a suite of abandoned property services, as well as post-merger clean-up, ownership location programs and lost shareholder searches.

Property may eventually be reported to the states, so Issuer Central provides final detailed escheatment reports for each jurisdiction automatically to all clients. 

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