



If you are the CEO or a leader in an organization that is currently looking to outsource some or all the IT support for your company, this guide contains important information that will be valuable to you as you search for a competent partner you can trust.

This guide will give you the insights you need to make an informed decision about your IT, whether it's keeping it in-house, choosing a hybrid in-house Managed Services Provider (MSP) option, or outsourcing your IT completely to an IT provider.

#### In this guide you will find:

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CHAPTER 1	WHAT IS AN MSP? What Does an MSP Do? What Can You Expect from an MSP?	3	
CHAPTER 2	COMPARING YOUR OPTIONS  Learn about the different types of services available and the pros and cons of each	5	
CHAPTER 3	PRICING Pricing estimates for break-fix vs managed IT services	10	
CHAPTER 4	EVALUATING IT COMPANIES  There are a lot of MSPs out there. Learn what to look for when weighing your options.	11	
CHAPTER 5	HOW AN MSP WILL SAVE YOU MONEY Learn five ways how partnering with a managed services provider can save you money.	18	

Ready? Let's get started.



# CHAPTER ONE

# WHAT IS AN MSP?

First, let's explain what an MSP is, what it does, and what you can expect when you partner with an MSP.



#### What is an MSP?

An MSP is a third-party resource that will proactively manage your IT infrastructure, so your systems stay secure, updated, and running smoothly. The MSP tackles all the daily technical issues with your network and your infrastructure so that your employees can focus on your core business.

#### What Does an MSP Do?

An MSP will partner with your business, and, if applicable, your existing IT department. The MSP will work side-by-side to provide a roadmap of the services your business needs to thrive and grow.

#### These services will include:

- Help desk services
- Cloud integration
- Patching and upgrading
- Regulatory compliance
- Monitoring and reporting
- Cybersecurity
- Business continuity and disaster backup and recovery
- IT business strategies
- Device auditing
- IT procurement and licensing

Once you agree on the IT services you wish to outsource, you will sign a Service Level Agreement that clearly outlines what responsibilities and roles the MSP will take on for your organization.



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#### What Can You Expect From an MSP?

Partnering with an MSP means that your service calls will receive prompt attention from a trained professional. The best IT services will be proactive, minimizing interruptions and downtime from failing networks or hardware.

#### Your organization can expect:

- Predictable billing
- Improved cybersecurity
- Industry specific regulatory compliance
- Cutting-edge technology and tools
- On-demand technology services

#### Why Turn to an MSP?

One of the biggest concerns businesses face today is security. Businesses aren't immune from attacks; in fact, 43% of small businesses are targeted every year. More alarming still, 60% of small businesses will be forced to close their doors forever after just one incident.

Businesses are planning to outsource their IT needs in record numbers: fueled by the vulnerabilities with remote workers, 78 percent of organizations are currently planning to invest more in their cybersecurity over the next twelve months.

The costs of an incident go far deeper than lost data, legal fees, and regulatory penalties. The cost in downtime alone can be staggering: The average cost of network downtime has been estimated at \$5,600 per minute, or \$300,000 per hour.

That downtime isn't exclusive to a cyber incident. Employee error, network failure, hardware failure are just a few of the ways your business' bottom line can take a significant hit.

MSPs dedicate their efforts to making sure these interruptions don't happen, and to promptly mitigating them and lessening the damages if they do.





#### **Ask Yourself**

- Can my business afford the costs of a cybersecurity breach?
- Am I getting the most value from my IT budget?
- How much will my team benefit from proactive solutions?
- Is my IT team overworked and falling behind on priority projects?
- Do I understand the constantly changing regulatory compliance requirements?

Now that you understand what an MSP is and how it can help your business operate efficiently, let's move on to your options.



## **CHAPTER** TWO

### **COMPARING** YOUR OPTIONS



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#### **Getting Started**

In this chapter we will talk about four different options available, along with giving you the pros and cons of each.

Let's take a closer look at your options.

OPTION 1	PAY AS YOU GO BREAK-FIX IT MODEL	6
OPTION 2	FIXED FEE MANAGED SERVICES	7
OPTION 3	HARDWARE/SOFTWARE SUPPORT FROM VENDORS	8
OPTION 4	CO-MANAGED SERVICES	9







#### **Break-Fix IT Model**

Your business can choose an IT "break-fix" solution, opting to pay for services on an as-needed basis. You can also choose this solution for bigger projects when your own IT company is stretched too thin, or to run assessments and testing on your network.

#### **Pros**

When you choose this level of coverage, you will not be paying monthly fees. This is a "pay as you go" platform, making it a seemingly good choice for companies on a limited IT budget.

#### Cons

A break-fix model means an unpredictable IT budget. While you may seem to be saving money in some months, you will most likely be spending far more money than you planned in other months. This makes it very difficult to adequately measure your IT budget, meaning that when an issue arises you may be scrambling to allocate the necessary funds from other departments.



Think of your network as a car. You don't think much about it unless the engine won't start or the brakes give out. At that point, you already know: this problem is going to cost me money. Depending on your maintenance habits, one of two things will happen:

#### Depending on your maintenance habits, one of two things will happen:

The car has been managed properly and the issue can be easily handled

#### **OR**

You've neglected the car, and the problem will be both costly and time-consuming to repair

Just like your car, regular and routine proactive network maintenance will help prevent major issues and ensure that issues that do come up are far easier and less costly to fix.

You can never predict when a network will fail, and when it does, it can fail spectacularly. Proper maintenance can mitigate the severity of a network failure, and in many circumstances even avoid it entirely. If you are not utilizing a professional to maintain your network, small issues will escalate quickly. The money you may have saved by not paying a monthly fee may be offset by a single network issue.



#### Managed IT Services

Partnering with a managed services provider (MSP) means outsourcing your IT needs. There are many levels of support you can choose, including allowing the provider to work alongside your own IT department (a service level Iconic IT calls "co-managed services"), outsourcing some aspects such as cybersecurity or assessments (explained in the next section), or giving the MSP full management responsibility of your infrastructure.

Managed IT services give you a predictable monthly budget, and a predictable team that will be familiar with your network. Your managed services provider will conduct routine testing and assessments that will prevent network issues or mitigate them before they become bigger. Proactive network maintenance will spot small issues before they become serious problems.

#### An MSP will generally provide the following services:

- Antivirus updates and monitoring
- Optimizing systems for maximum performance
- Spam filtering and other email protections
- Spyware identification and removal
- Firewall updates, upgrades, and monitoring
- Trending technologies and tools such as cloud services and backup strategies
- Strategic planning and consultation

Having a third-party manage your IT services provides peace-of-mind and a hands-off approach so your network will be continuously updated and improved while your own teams can focus on running your business.

#### **Pros**

Managed services providers create working roadmaps and priorities for your business. A signed Service Level Agreement lets you accurately predict your monthly IT expenses and understand exactly what is covered.

MSPs typically document everything about your network into their internal knowledgebases that all their technicians can access in order to more quickly resolve support requests. Some MSPs go a step further and have dedicated teams for specific groups of clients, which ensures you're always talking to the same set of technicians.

MSPs specialize in securing networks against current threats in order to keep your network running smoothly. They can assist or with or completely manage a transition to the cloud, enhance your security footprint with cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence technologies, and keep you compliant in an ever-changing technology landscape.

#### **Cons**

Many businesses feel they cannot afford managed IT services, and finding a good balance between budget and needed level of support may seem impossible. That said, with MSPs you generally get what you pay for.

To mitigate this risk, look for an MSP that doesn't lock you into a long-term contract. Should you become unhappy with their service or simply outgrow them, you never want to be stuck with an IT provider that's no longer a fit for your company.





#### **Hardware/Software Support from Vendors**

Free software support services rely on a customer service-based, remote-only support platform for the applications you run most frequently. These can include software updates and security patches or limited help-desk services. You will still require an internal IT tech team to run and trouble-shoot the applications on site and install all upgrades and security patches.

Software vendors are not consistent with the amount of free vs. paid support (support contract) available, but the best choice for software support is almost always from a paid support contract. Meanwhile, hardware vendors are rather consistent, seldom offering a warranty or support.

Support from unofficial sources such as message boards, mailing lists, third-party websites will vary greatly among both hardware and software vendors.

#### **Pros**

Software support is usually free, included with the applications themselves. Most software companies will alert you when upgrades and updates are available, and 1-800 numbers will put you in contact with a "specialist" for that specific application.

#### Cons

When your network is experiencing a problem, it can be hard to pinpoint the exact source. You also may experience extended wait times before being connected to an "expert" who reads from a script. The solutions to your issue may be far more complicated than the voice on the other end of the phone is able to identify, much less implement. Remember that software support will only cover the applications and programs you use, not the infrastructure supporting it.

Software companies do attempt, in good faith, to release software updates frequently. When updating, however, your employees will be unable to access the program and after the installation they may find some key features are disabled. Knowing this, most employees are more than happy to continue hitting "remind me later" rather than disrupt their daily activities. Some software updates will require hardware updates as well and be at risk for "compatibility issues" that will affect the integration of the updates.

Important note: An application's security patches are only as good as the information the developer has regarding trending threats, and your network may not be as protected as it should be.

Lastly, if you run several families of applications like most businesses, you will need to have the help-desk services number for each one on hand whenever an issue arises. Your antivirus software, for instance, will have a different set of support numbers than your operating systems or your email client support services.

A managed services provider will streamline the process, shouldering the burden of support for all your business-related applications and software. The provider will update and upgrade all security patches in real-time, avoiding the vulnerability of gaps in security and software versions.



#### **Co-Managed Services Explained**

There are two managed services options: fully managed, which handles every part of a business' IT needs, and co-managed, which works alongside to supplement or complement your existing IT team.

Your internal IT lead may not be willing to admit that your IT department is over-worked and lacking the resources to keep up with the demands of the modern workplace. Unfortunately, many businesses find themselves unable to expand their internal IT departments for many reasons, with budgetary considerations topping the list. It's costly to find the right IT personnel, pay them a competitive salary, include benefit packages, sick leave and vacation time, and the equipment they need to properly to do their jobs.

Co-managed services is a solution that gives your IT department an extra boost. It allows your existing technicians to benefit from the expertise of a MSP while maintaining autonomy within your company.

#### How Would Co-Managed Services Work for my Business?

Co-managed services work together with your own IT department. This can happen in several ways:

- The MSP can handle daily tickets so your IT department can focus on larger projects
- The MSP can handle large projects to free up your IT department for daily tickets
- The MSP can monitor the network and run routine tests and scans
- The MSP can manage deployment of all OS and software patches, updates, and upgrades
- The MSP can provide a prioritized IT strategy roadmap for your IT department to follow
- The MSP can oversee implementation of the IT roadmap
- Any combination of the above, or any specific tasks you wish to outsource

Remember: co-managed services is a *boost* for your IT department, not a replacement.



## **CHAPTER** THREE

#### **PRICING**

Your network's size, the age of your equipment, and the level of coverage you need will shape your business' IT spend. As a business leader, you need to understand your network needs: are you looking choosing your options, you will most likely need to decide between break-fix model or managed IT services.



#### Pay As You Go Break-Fix Model

Break-fix pricing varies widely. The price for an onsite visit can range from \$75-250 per hour, with most providers requiring at least a couple of hours at a minimum for a service call.

#### **Fixed Fee Managed Services**

Outsourcing IT is frequently the best option, and more affordable in the long run. Many MSPs offer different packages and layers of coverage and some have a great hybrid solution for augmenting your IT department.

#### There are two commonly-used pricing options:

Per device: You are billed monthly per device (every PC, laptop, Mac, or server) regardless of how many people are using each.

**Per user.** The opposite of per-device, this option bills for every user regardless of how many devices they use. This is the most common pricing model used by MSPs.

Generally, you will find that prices vary significantly among MSPs, however you can expect fees to range between \$75 to \$300 per user per month, with most pricing falling between the \$100 to \$150 range. Some MSPs offer a basic plan, offering add-ons a la carte while others provide an an all-inclusive plan of services and coverage.

Additionally, that there is a hybrid option as well: co-managed services can provide an excellent balance between outsourcing all your IT needs vs. maintaining your current IT support structure. Pricing for this model depends on which services you choose to outsource and which you keep in-house.

# FOUR

## **EVALUATING IT COMPANIES**



# Considerations When Choosing an IT Managed Services Provider

There are a lot of MSPs out there, and like restaurants with coffee, each one claims to be the best. Here is a list of things to look for when weighing your options.

1	Experienced Professionals	12
2	A Clear Onboarding Process	12
3	Proven Processes	13
4	Flexibility and Transparency	14
5	Scalability	14
6	The Right Fit	19
7	Support Desk Services	19
8	Consulting and Strategic Guidance	10
9	Proactive Maintenance	10
10	An Effective and Comprehensive Network Security Stack	17
11	Cybersecurity Awareness Training	13
12	<b>Dedicated Support Teams</b>	17



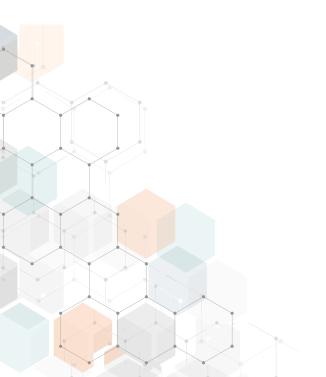
#### Does the IT Company Have:

#### **1** Experienced Professionals

An MSP should provide experienced professionals with the expertise you need to address every aspect of your IT needs including:

- Technicians
- Account Managers
- Strategic Planning Professionals
- Cybersecurity Experts
- Customer Service Representatives

These are just a few of the benchmarks you should look for when considering a partnership with an MSP.



#### 2 A Clear Onboarding Process

When you sign on with an MSP, what will your first weeks look like? How about a month from now? Six months? Your MSP should be very clear about the steps they are going to take and what that will look like for your business.

#### A Typical MSP's Onboarding Process Should Look Like:



Agreement Signed



**Onboarding Meeting** 



Day 1 of Services



Install Firewall, Backup & Security Tools



Nework Documentation



Fully Onboarded!



Quarterly or Annual Strategic Business Reviews



#### Does the IT Company Have:



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#### Does the IT Company Have:

#### Flexibility and Transparancy

An MSP should be flexible and willing to work within your budget, and should be completely up front about pricing and coverage.

- Avoid MSPs that quote prices without researching your company to make sure they are a good fit for you
- Stay away from one-size-fits-all solutions
- Read the fine print to make sure you're getting exactly what you're paying for



#### 5 Scalability

A business can easily outgrow an MSP when the provider is too eager to get a signature on a contract and doesn't bother to understand their client's vision and goals.

- Make sure the MSP will give you a free consultation to assess both your current and future needs
- Avoid any MSP that doens't seem willing to align their strategies with your goals
- Make sure the potential provider has a realistic understanding of where you see your company in a year, within the next five years, and further out

#### Does the IT Company Have:

#### 6 The Right Fit

You work hard to develop and maintain a company culture, and your MSP should be closely aligned with that culture. No one wants to call a support desk and talk to a technician that's unhelpful, lazy, and condescending. As you strive to provide great customer service to your clients, your MSP should do the same. **Ask yourself:** 

- Does this company have a "personality" like ours?
- Can I see myself or my own employees interacting with this MSP's employees?
- Are the MSP's employees friendly and helpful at every level (sales, managers, administrators, help desk services)?

#### 7 Support Desk Services

Have you ever tried to Google a solution to a problem because you know a particular company's customer service line will keep you on hold indefinitely and when they do answer, won't be very helpful? Your MSP's support desk services can be a pleasure to deal with, or a hassle that your employees will actively avoid. Support Desk services are a vital part of any MSP, and how this department interacts with your employees is critical.

- Google the MSP to get a feel for how it resolves issues
- Ask to meet the Support Desk technicians who you will be working with
- Try calling the Support Desk at different times a day to get a feel for how long their wait times may be



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#### Does the IT Company Have:

#### 8 Consulting and Strategic Guidence

Consulting and strategic guidance are how an MSP produces a technology plan, or roadmap, to align your technology with your business. This roadmap should include all planned and recommended changes, upgrades, and improvements for your network clearly defined, prioritized, and priced out to provide you with a comprehensive IT strategy.

#### An effective technology roadmap should include:

- Prioritized, individualized, and manageable goals
- Planning to complement your current IT structure and budget
- A regular in-depth review of your current technology to identify any misalignment with your business goals

#### 9 Proactive Maintenance

A proactive approach to network maintenance provides advance warning to potential problems and can save your business significant downtime and costs vs. reacting to a sudden disruptive incident.

#### Look for MSPs that offer.

- Routine network testing and monitoring
- Rapid intervention when a potential problem is identified
- Automatic patches and upgrades when they become available

Top-tier MSPs spend

60%

OF THE TIME

proactively managing networks so their clients can focus on their business, not IT issues.



#### Does the IT Company Have:

### 10 An Effective and Comprehensive Network Security Stack

Modern cybercrime needs modern solutions; traditional antivirus is no longer an effective way to protect your network. Encryption, antivirus powered by AI, multi factor authentication, identity and access management platforms, and other layered strategies are necessary to keep your network secure.

- Does the MSP offer multiple layers of antivirus, such as a fully-manned 24/7 Security Operations Center?
- Does the MSP offer routine Dark Web credential monitoring to detect stolen personally-identifiable information?
- Does the MSP guarantee the timely deployment of updates and security patches?

#### 11 Cybersecurity Awareness Training

While your employees are your most valued resource, they can also be your biggest security vulnerability. Most malware and ransomware infections occur through email phishing scams, so it's vital that your MSP offers routine cybersecurity awareness training to keep your employees informed and vigilant. At the very least, this training should cover:

- Identifying suspicious emails
- Phishing similation campaigns to test and educate
- Explanation of email attack vectors such as spoofing, business email compromise, and fraudulent links

#### 12 Dedicated Support Teams

While an MSP may have an excellent Support Desk to handle day-to-day issues, what happens if the problem is too complex to be handled remotely? Will they send out the next available technician, or one who is already familiar with your network, employees, and business needs? Having a dedicated support team means your technicians will arrive onsite with an understanding of the issue and how it affects your productivity, as well as documented knowledge of where the issue started and how to fix it.

Top-tier MSPs believe that dedicated teams should go one step further than support. They also provide dedicated teams for every aspect of their relationship with the client, including system administrators, strategic planners, and account managers.





# CHAPTER

### HOW CAN AN MSP SAVE MY BUSINESS MONEY?



A recent study revealed that budgetary concerns are among the top issues cited by business leaders when considering their current and future IT plans. While partnering with an MSP seems cost-prohibitive initially, it will save your business money. Here are five ways partnering with an MSP can save you money:

#### 1 Predictable Billing

It's easier to save money when you know exactly what you will spend every month.

#### 2 Decreased Downtime

Partnering with an MSP allows proactive monitoring of your network to identify and address potential issues before they affect your network. Increased productivity and efficiency lead to decreased downtime.

#### 3 Decreased Indirect Costs

Without managed IT services, your business is at risk for regulatory violations. In the event of a data breach, if you are unable to prove you took necessary steps to protect your data, your business can be held liable for damages in a court of law. The fallout from such an incident can include damage to your brand, lost customers, legal awards to customers for damages, costly industry violations, and more. An MSP takes some of the liability from business owners by providing comprehensive technological compliance with regulations.

#### 4 Prioritize Your IT Needs

As part of the ongoing consulting and strategic guidance an MSP provides, your technology roadmap will prioritize your IT needs. Without expert guidance, business leaders and IT department management may not know where to start with network optimization, cybersecurity programs, and other technology initiatives. An MSP can guide your business by focusing IT spend on the most important and necessary strategies first.

#### 5 Trending Tech Will Save Money on Hardware

The recent trend of migrating services to the cloud is saving businesses significant investment in on-premises IT infrastructure. The level of network security, reliability, and backup/disaster recovery that cloud services offer is also far superior to anything most businesses could afford to build themselves. Additionally, the benefit of being able to connect your employees to your cloud services securely from anywhere in the world means increased efficiency and productivity.

## WHY ICONIC IT?



#### Why Iconic IT

Iconic IT is an award-winning Managed Services Provider who specializes in cutting-edge network optimization solutions, cloud technologies, cybersecurity, and business strategy and planning. Partnering with us gives you the access to the tools and strategies that your business needs to survive and thrive.

#### 1 Iconic IT Dedicated Tech Teams

At Iconic IT, we are all about teams. From our dedicated tech teams to our helpful support services, we offer more than just talented and friendly professionals. Iconic IT's teams must pass rigorous hiring requirements including enterprise-level technical knowledge.

It doesn't stop there. Our account managers and help desk teams are trained in the DeJulius model of customer service, meaning your experience will be outstanding at every level. We believe that better services come from "ownership," so every client is assigned an account manager to ensure only the highest quality services. Our teams work together seamlessly so businesses can focus on what's important.



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#### 2 Iconic IT's Advanced Cybersecurity Platforms

Iconic IT is also the place to find Iconic Fortify, a unique cybersecurity platform that is a blend of cutting-edge AI software and a manned Security Operations Center that continuously monitors and protects your network and systems from the myriad cyberthreats on the Internet. We also make sure your employees become the Protectors of Your Network by providing cybersecurity awareness training and phishing simulations.

#### 3 Iconic IT's Highly-Trained and Experienced Professionals

Our technicians are highly trained and experienced. Iconic IT has a CISSP (Certified Information Systems Security Professional) on staff, one of only 141,000 technicians across the globe to achieve this elite certification.



Certified Information Systems Security Professional



#### 4 Iconic IT's Technology Alignment Coordinator

A unique member of your technical team, the Technology Alignment Coordinator's responsibility is to perform regular proactive reviews of your network infrastructure to identify technology gaps that aren't aligned with your business goals or aren't in compliance with technical best-practices or regulations. This brings visibility of those needs to both you and your lconic teams so that they get addressed quickly and thoroughly.

#### 5 Iconic IT's Outstanding Support Desk

Our support desk services are second-to-none, with friendly and talented people who will help you immediately or find someone who can. We believe that every minute spent on hold waiting for an answer is a minute too long.

#### 6 Iconic IT's Affordable, Comprehensive Plans

You'll find that even our basic IT services cover more than many MSPs' comprehensive plans. We provide the right services at the right prices, with plans and packages that fit any IT budget. We stand behind our services with both a risk-free 90-day money-back guarantee and no long-term contracts.





#### A Plan for Every Budget







**LEARN MORE** 

### How do we stack up to the competition?

#### Use This Checklist To Compare Managed Services Providers Before You Make Your Decision

IC()NIC IT

Your Choice...

**COMPANY B** 

**COMPANY A** 

Do they answer their phones live?		V
Do they have a written, guaranteed response time to support tickets you submit?		V
Do they provide weekend and after-hours emergency support, or is that extra?		V
Do they take the time to explain things in plain English? No "geek speak"?		V
Do their technicians arrive on time?		V
Do they provide detailed invoices explaining what you are paying for?		V
Do they have adequate errors and omissions, business liability and workers' compensation insurance to protect you?		V
Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget in writing?		V
Do they insist on monitoring your network 24/7/365 to prevent problems from turning into downtime?		V
Do they provide backups, patches and updates so you know for sure that your systems are secure and protected?		V

COMPANY A	COMPANY B	ICONIC IT
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#### Selecting An Managed Service Provider Doesn't Have To Be Confusing

#### Get Started with our 3-Step Proven Process at No Cost or Obligation:

Our free consultation with you is an in-depth look at the current state of your IT with a focus on enhancing your existing infrastructure and providing you the tools you need to grow and thrive.

#### STEP 1 Discuss

Discuss your unique situation, any concerns you have and of course, answer any questions you have about us.

#### STEP 2 Discover

Let us take an in-depth technical look at your network with our 75-point network assessment

#### STEP 3 Recommend

Receive a customized IT technology roadmap specific to your business goals,

#### **Get Started Today!**

# Step 1 is Easy. Schedule a 10-Minute Call to Discuss

Click to Schedule Your Free 10-Minute Consultation

