

Managed IT Services Buyers Guide

Managing your IT systems isn't the reason you started your business.



But it is the reason we started ours.





You know that building a successful business is no small challenge.

The hard work of bringing the right product or service to market can consume months or years of every owner, partner, associate, and employee's most diligent efforts. In truth, that work never really stops, and the most innovative companies are always rebuilding, retesting, and improving their offerings. The struggle to place the perfect solution in the hands of customers is the reason companies are founded, funded, and brought to life.

But of course, that's not the only struggle businesses face. Finding the right people is a never-ending quest to get closer to perfection. Understanding customers' needs and goals taxes even the most brilliant business minds. Creating a marketing message that engages audiences can sometimes seem impossible. All of these trials — and more — compete with your main goal: delivering a quality solution to your customers.

Underlying every single one of these challenges, however, is one particularly fundamental element of your company. It's a component you may not spend much time thinking about — at least, as long as things are working right. Not only is this component a central pillar of your ability to do business right now, but it's one of the crucial factors in determining how well you'll be able to do business tomorrow.

Your company will never be able to operate to the best of its abilities if your IT simply isn't up to the task.

It's the backbone of any 21st Century company; it's the element that makes your business come to life: it's your IT environment.

Your computers, servers, data storage, networks, and software all come together to create your IT environment. Without the right technology in place and functioning properly, without comprehensive cybersecurity measures in place, and without an IT strategy for the future, it doesn't matter the quality of the products and services you offer.

More than that, though, your company will never be able to reach its full potential without an IT solution that enables you to mature, evolve, and grow successfully.

But managing your IT is not the reason you got into business. In the same way your organization brings in product developers, sales professionals, marketing experts, and employees of every role, so too should a growing company like yours seek out a managed IT service provider. Not only will a managed service provider (MSP) take care of your technology here and now, but the best providers will give you the tools you need to make sure your IT environment is ready for wherever your business takes you in the future.

How, though, should you decide which MSP is best for you?





In this document, Envision Consulting will share the knowledge and experience we've gained during two decades of designing, building, and maintaining powerful IT environments. Our goal is to inform you of the most important services an MSP can provide, and how those services should best be delivered.

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SECURITY

WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH FOR?



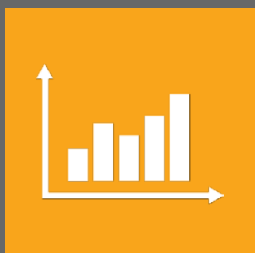
SERVICE

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT?



PROCESS

WHAT SHOULD IT LOOK LIKE?



PLAN

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW.



SECURITY

Without a doubt, cybersecurity is the most crucial element of your IT environment for an MSP to address. Threats like hacking, ransomware, and viruses of all kinds are aimed squarely at successful businesses like yours



THE NUMBERS

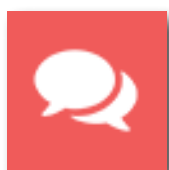
- **\$200,000:** *The Average cost of security breach for businesses of any size:*
- **60%** *of companies go out of business within 6 months of an attack*
- **43%** *of attacks are aimed at small businesses*
- **14%** *of small businesses are prepared to defend themselves against an attack*
- **\$5.2 trillion** *is how much cyberattacks will cost global business an estimated per year within the next five years*

In a world where these numbers are “normal”, there shouldn’t be anything “normal” about your IT security precautions. The best MSPs will understand this issue right from the start, and will build layers of protection into your system.



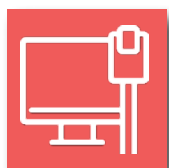
HARDWARE PROTECTED

HARDWARE MUST BE PROTECTED BY ANTI-MALWARE AND ANTIVIRUS SOFTWARE



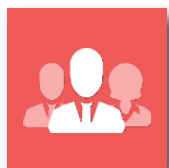
COMMUNICATIONS SECURE

COMPANY EMAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS REQUIRE THEIR OWN SUITE OF SECURITY TOOLS



NETWORKS GUARDED

YOUR NETWORKS MUST BE GUARDED BY FIREWALLS AND ACCESS POLICIES



USERS TRAINED

USERS MUST BE TRAINED ON APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES AND HELD ACCOUNTABLE



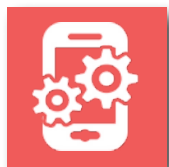
DISASTER READY

BACKUPS AND DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESSES MUST BE IN PLACE.



DATA SECURE

DATA LOSS PREVENTION TOOLS (DLP) MUST BE ACTIVE.



TWO FACTOR SAFETY

MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION PROTOCOLS ARE NEEDED TO PROTECT SYSTEMS



SECURITY



PREVENT



DETECT



RESPOND

The security mantra of your MSP must be the following: Prevention, Detection, and Incident Response. By preventing attacks with tools like firewalls, detecting intrusions at the earliest possible moment, and responding quickly to any issue, your MSP will keep your data safe, your customer accounts secure, and prevent your business from taking a massive (and potentially fatal) financial hit.



Your managed service provider must provide exactly that: service. What good is an MSP that doesn't respond quickly to your calls, that doesn't have the right answers, or that can't keep up with your growing organization?



A GOOD MSP WILL OFFER 24/7 365 SUPPORT

This is crucial, especially in light of the need for thorough IT security, as we just discussed. If you suffer an attack, intrusion, or data breach in the small hours of a weekend morning, it's vital that your MSP be able to respond quickly — no matter what day of the week. Many MSPs will offer a guaranteed response time of around two hours, but the best providers will routinely perform better than that by a significant margin.



A GOOD MSP WILL COMMUNICATE WELL

To get the most from your MSP, you simply must have a provider who communicates quickly and clearly. As we said, managing your IT environment is not the reason you got into business. You hire an MSP to take care of the details for you. But that MSP should be held to the same standards as the rest of your company's workforce. If they can't pass on crucial information in a timely, usable fashion, what good are they really doing for you?



A GOOD MSP WILL DO MORE FOR YOU

Finally, the best managed service providers always go the extra mile in their service to you. This means they must be proactive rather than reactive; that they must take the time to dive deeply into a problem area to find the real root cause of the issue; that they care not just about solving immediate problems, but that they look ahead to potential future problems and do their best to prevent them now.



PROCESS



“From an IT perspective, what should a modern business look like?”

That’s the question your MSP should have at the heart of its operation, and the answer they give you should always be rooted in your specific context, as well as backed by a proven process to deliver the results you need.

That process is the key. With a thorough, objective, and repeatable series of steps and phases — each with specific goals — your MSP should be able to answer the following:



WHERE IS YOUR IT ENVIRONMENT NOW?



WHERE DO YOU NEED IT TO GO IN THE FUTURE?



WHAT CONCRETE STEPS CAN YOU TAKE TO GET THERE?

This methodical procedure — called a “technical alignment” — is the foundation of the work for any good MSP. By answering questions about your current IT environment now, the provider should be able to place your business on a roadmap to evolution, maturity, and growth.

The technical alignment provides you and your MSP with the ability to monitor your progress as your capabilities are expanded. It serves as an extremely objective measuring stick, as well as a best practices analysis. Using standards-driven checklists, the MSP can point to potential problem areas, opportunities for efficiency, and growth-oriented actions.

Without this foundational alignment process, you and your MSP would be groping around in the dark, in an environment neither of you understands. Then, even the hardest work will never be enough to build a truly effective and secure IT landscape.



PLAN



This is the ultimate measure of an MSP. This, the plan for your business's IT growth and evolution, is what sets effective providers apart from the rest. This plan and its execution strategy are the greatest assets you can gain from working with an MSP.

When a technical alignment is performed well, as we mentioned, it will enable your MSP to plot out the actual course of action for your IT environment. At that point, you won't be troubleshooting your IT anymore, you'll be streamlining it. The entire purpose of the plan and strategy are to help you stop treading water, and to actually move you forward.

Like the technical alignment, the plan should be both objective, and objective-driven. However, the plan also adds in crucial subjective elements of your business: who are you, what do you want, what are your goals? This roots the plan deeply in objective truth and your specific needs.

The plan your MSP offers should be tailored just for you. An off-the-shelf solution simply doesn't cut it today, when businesses are so diverse and systems are so complex.

It should also be a clear and practical plan, balancing the growth in your IT capabilities against the no-less-vital demands of the rest of your business. What good is a strategy which can't be executed? How much value is there in a plan which doesn't acknowledge reality, and lacks the ability for necessary adjustments? An effective MSP always strives to understand their customer completely, so that their advice does the most good at all times.

Without the clear vision that a concrete plan and strategy offers, your company won't just be in the dark now. The path forward will never be clear, either, and that will place all your dreams and goals for the future at risk.



We know how frustrating it can be when your IT environment holds you back, and we understand the concerns you have about safety and security.



THAT'S WHY WE FOCUS ON MULTI-LAYERED CYBERSECURITY FOR YOUR SYSTEMS



THAT'S WHY WE HAVE A 9 MINUTE AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME



THAT'S WHY WE TAKE CUSTOMERS THROUGH OUR THOROUGH AND OBJECTIVE TECHNICAL ALIGNMENT



AND THAT'S WHY WE BUILD PROACTIVE PLANS TO PROPEL YOUR COMPANY FORWARD.

Forget the pain of constantly putting out fires and dealing with unresponsive support, and instead start seeing the future your business was meant for. Visit Envision Consulting today, talk with us, and let us put you on the right path to enable and empower your growth.