

2023 IT SERVICES BUYER'S GUIDE

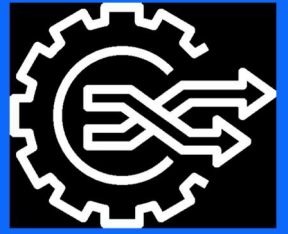


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THE 2023 IT SERVICES BUYER'S GUIDE

Contents

CHAPTER 1 Technology changes Everything in our businesses	3
CHAPTER 2 You've got a business plan. Do you have an IT strategy?.....	6
When did you last update your ITstrategy?	7
CHAPTER 3 Why business owners & managers switch IT partners.....	10
You probably won't be surprised to learn that we heard from a lot of businesses last year who were unhappy with their current IT support provider.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 4 Protect the most important thing in your business	17
CHAPTER 5 Why you should be highly skeptical of all IT support companies.....	22
CHAPTER 6 What every IT support company wishes you know about IT	28
CHAPTER 7 How to help your internal IT people if you have them	32
CHAPTER 8 Don't take our word for it: Here's what our clients say.....	35
CHAPTER 9 About us.....	37
CHAPTER 10 What will typically happen during your first 90 days.....	39
CHAPTER 11 What to do next	42



CHAPTER 1

Technology changes
Everything in our businesses

In 2020, everything changed for everyone the world over.

Back at the start of the pandemic, we had no idea just how long-term its impact would be, did we?

Because what was initially just a rush to work from home, accelerated the development of something that has now become the everyday norm for many businesses...

Hybrid working.

That means being able to work in the office or in your home. Or anywhere.

Increasingly employees are demanding this flexibility. Which means a change in how businesses handle their information.

Data is becoming more transient. It's easier to access it on any device, from wherever you are. While this has endless positives, it also means that data security is more important than ever.

Over the past few years, we've witnessed a terrifying rise in something called ransomware. Ransomware has become an all-too-common threat and only the big ones make the news. Many businesses think it can't or won't happen to them. It's not a matter of IF but WHEN. Small businesses need to be vigilant and proactive.

Devices and software are getting smarter every day and businesses want to take advantage of that business intelligence. That knife cuts both ways as cyber threats to businesses have also increased their intelligence.

Most businesses have seen their technology needs develop fast. These needs are still accelerating – and will continue to do so throughout this year and next.

It's important that you have a technology strategy to drive this, rather than just a policy of reacting to needs as they arise.

Key technology areas to focus on in your business are *Defend* and *Invest and Respond*.



- **Defend is about protecting your business from cyber criminals. The amount of cyber-crime is constantly increasing, to levels never seen before. The goal is to minimize risk and make your business as small of a target as possible.**
- **Invest is about making sure technology is powering your business forward, not holding it back. Consider how technology can boost your bottom line rather than be a cost to account for.**
- **Respond is about being ready for the worst case scenario with a plan in hand on how to ensure the business will continue to thrive.**

As all this evolves, more business functions become totally reliant on technology. Great IT support can really enhance the benefits of technology

I suspect you're in one of two camps. You either are growing and realizing the need for regular IT support OR you're not 100% happy with your current IT support company and are looking to change.

This guide is written to help you understand how a trusted IT support partner enhance your business, and what great IT support looks like.

I'll explain why we genuinely partner with our clients and refuse to become just another supplier. I'll also explain why it's critical you put your IT strategy and data security at the very core of your long-term business planning.



CHAPTER 2

You've got a business plan.
Do you have an IT strategy?

When did you last update your IT strategy?

Hopefully it's something you've made changes to fairly recently, to take Covid times into account.

If you don't have an IT strategy, or if you haven't given it much thought over the last year, now is definitely the time.

If you use any technology in your business – whether that's something as simple as a cash register, or it's a full blown network for multiple locations; a proper IT strategy will be your best friend. It's the foundation to growing your business. It can mean the difference between surviving a time of uncertainty and thriving through it.

OK, there's a big chance I'm biased! But I cannot stress enough how important a well thought out IT strategy is for any successful business.

Your IT strategy should work alongside your business plan, detailing the ways your technology will accelerate progress towards your goals and objectives. It should consider both long and short term targets and leave room for change where necessary (if nothing else, 2020 has taught us just how quickly we might need to adapt).

And while it's called an IT strategy, it's not just about your technology. Sure, you'll have plans for the technology and devices that you use, and those that you aspire to use in future. But, in reality the strategy is about your business, and how your technology can help you to achieve all the things you'd like to, in the easiest way possible.

A great starting point is to take a look at your current IT infrastructure. What works well, and what would you like to improve? As your business grows, will your technology grow with you, or will you need to look at new software, networks, and even phone systems?

Speak to the people working in your business. What do they think works really well, and what would they change if they could? Are there parts of your infrastructure that actually hinder what you're doing? Could you save time if you switched over to different software, or if one app could communicate with another one?

When you're working with an IT partner, they will be able to assist you in identifying the right hardware and software. They will make recommendations based on the way you work, and the ways you want to work. They should even be able to spot potential issues that you hadn't noticed and suggest a simpler way of doing things.

A technology roadmap as part of your strategy will help you to budget better, and know what's going to be needed, and when. It'll stop those surprise costs and random invoices you didn't budget for. It can seem a little complicated to do this yourself. This is exactly where an IT partner can be and should be of assistance.

Now, more than ever, every expenditure needs to be justified. Every investment needs to work hard for your business. You want value for money from everything you do.

Create a range of metrics to help you track how well your infrastructure is actually working for you. It's nice that your team likes the way a certain system works but, if you're not getting a return on your investment then it may not be the best fit.

Your IT partner should also get involved with regular strategic reviews. It's up to you how often you do these, but I would recommend at least every 6 months to year. You should look at what's going well and what's taking longer than you'd like it to. A few adjustments may be all it needs to get you back on track towards hitting your goals.

This is why I keep talking about an IT partner. Not an IT support company. Not an IT support provider. A partner.

Imagine an office building. It has a cleaner who comes in every evening and cleans up the mess that people make. That's how lots of IT support companies work. They just clean up the mess.

We actually prefer to work as a facilities manager. You see, a facilities manager is constantly thinking and planning. They schedule what maintenance the building needs. They look at what they can proactively do to stop the building falling into any level of disrepair.

Yes, there's still an element of managing the cleaners and making sure they've done their job. But they're proactive enough to stop most of the problems happening in the first place.

That's what an IT partner does. We take a proactive approach. We do as much as we can in the background to stop things from going wrong in the first place.

Of course, things will still go wrong. Unfortunately, that's inevitable when it comes to fast moving technology and data. But that's when the clean-up work happens and things get fixed. All of that proactive work means that we need to clean up a lot less than an IT support company that doesn't work proactively.

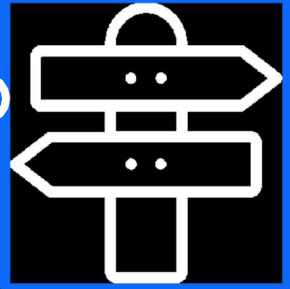
What my team and I like to do for our clients is to create ongoing fluid technology roadmaps. It means that both you and I know:

- **Exactly what will be happening over the next 2 to 3 years**
- **Exactly what technological investments you need to make**
- **There are no surprises. It's all planned and regular strategic reviews help us all to move in the right direction**

A roadmap also allows us to see what can be delayed (if there's a problem), what investments are critical, and similarly, if you're ahead of things financially, what can be brought forward.

In large part, it's our partnership that allows this in-depth planning to take place. We get to know your business as if it's our own. We're constantly working with you on your business and learning more about you and your team.

This commitment makes it easy for us to help you because we know (just as well as you do) where the business is going.



CHAPTER 3

Why business owners & managers
switch IT partners

What are the top 10 reasons that people want to make the switch to a new and improved IT support partner?

REASON TO SWITCH #1 YOU'RE NOT SEEING BUSINESS RESULTS

Return on investment is everything. Especially right now. You need to be able to see at a glance exactly how hard your IT partner is working for you. And what benefit that work is bringing to your business.

An IT support partner should not only provide a detailed IT strategy for the long and short term. They should also give you a set of metrics which you can measure results by.

And these metrics should be relevant and important to your business. Not a boiler plate set full of convoluted jargon. I've heard too many stories of IT companies providing very vague metrics that are impossible to decipher.

REASON TO SWITCH #2 POOR COMMUNICATION

This can cover a whole range of issues... from it taking far too long for them to acknowledge problems... to them not letting you know when updates are taking place... or not getting back to you when they say they will...

If we were talking about any other kind of supplier, these gripes might seem a little petty. But as we know, without working technology, business can't run as it's supposed to. And these little gripes become huge issues.

Again, this is another way for you to distinguish an IT support provider from an IT support partner.

You need a responsive IT support partner who:

- **Acknowledges issues in good time**
- **Keeps you in the loop of everything that you need to know**
- **Does what they say they'll do, when they say they'll do it**

Just as your success is their success, your failure is their failure. So, the faster an issue can be resolved, the better it is for both parties.

REASON TO SWITCH #3

THEY DON'T TAKE DATA SECURITY SERIOUSLY

Yes, you read that correctly.

There are some IT support providers – whose job it is to keep your data safe and secure – that don't do the same thing within their own business.

They don't make it a priority to keep themselves educated on the latest scams and threats. They can't keep you up to speed.

And they won't go out of their way to ensure every last part of your data is as safe as it can be. Or that your software 100% up to date all the time.

I know... this scares me too...

Is this really a company you'd want to be responsible for keeping your business safe from the growing number of data breaches?

REASON TO SWITCH #4

THEY WON'T GO OUTSIDE OF THEIR CONTRACT

"Sorry, we don't cover that."

Ever heard that from your IT support provider? Lots of businesses have. But so long as the request relates to your technology, it should be a red flag.

"We don't cover that" suggests a real lack of concern for your business. And that's not what a partner is about.

A partner actively spends time looking at new ways to improve your network; your data security; and your infrastructure. They won't be working rigidly to a one-size fits all contract.

And that's just the point. One size doesn't fit all, because each and every business is unique. Even two businesses in the same street, selling the same product or service will have a different way of working. They'll use different software and devices, have different people working with them, and importantly have different goals.

You need an IT partner that will take your goals as their own and do as much as they can to help you reach them.

REASON TO SWITCH #5

THINGS TAKE TOO LONG TO FIX

Understandably, many problems can't always be fixed immediately. Some issues take a while to get to the bottom of. Other problems are rare and may take a little more diagnostic work.

But in these situations, good communication is key.

It might take you a while to see a resolution, but if your IT support partner is keeping you updated at each step, you're confident it's in hand.

Whereas if your support request is still awaiting a response three days later... you've got a problem.

And would you believe that some issues never get fixed at all? Or that one thing gets fixed only to break something else?

This is technology we're talking about. It goes wrong. It doesn't always work the way we want it to. But you absolutely should not be facing issue after issue and waiting days to have problems resolved. You should not face silence when you need help.

All that waiting means downtime for your business. Where's the value for money in that?

REASON TO SWITCH #6

THEY NEVER ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

When you take on an IT support partner, it's vital that both businesses take responsibility for their side of the agreement. Failing to do so causes a huge lack of trust. And means that the relationship is going nowhere.

I've heard from business owners who have reported an issue to their IT support provider, only to be told that it's their fault that the issue arose!

(despite them following advice and instruction from that same IT support provider)

I've also heard from business owners who have reported issues to their IT support provider; only to be told that they need to contact someone else (such as a software supplier) about the problem.

The idea of an IT support partner is that you trust them to deal with their area of expertise, while you get on with yours. If they're passing the buck when you face a problem, you're not getting the benefit of a support partner at all.

REASON TO SWITCH #7

THEY CONFUSE YOU WITH TECH TALK

If technology wasn't complicated, everyone would be able to take care of their own business infrastructure without a problem.

However, the truth is quite the opposite. It's full of strange words and concepts, and everything changes every 7 minutes! (it seems that way anyway).

It's a minefield if you don't know what you're doing.

The hallmark of a good IT support partner is that they take this complication and make it look easy. Better still, they make it sound easy. They explain things to you without sounding like they're speaking a foreign language.

Again, it all comes down your connection as partners. If you can't communicate properly with each other, how fruitful is this relationship really going to be? The likelihood is that it'll leave both sides frustrated, and your business won't be able to make the most of the technology it has.

REASON TO SWITCH #8

YOU'RE NOT LEARNING

Ok, so we're not expecting your IT support partner to teach you, their job. You don't need to be an expert in IT - that's what you're paying someone to do for you. However, there should be a certain element of learning when you partner with an IT company.

For example, you need to learn about cyber-security; how to avoid scams; and how to protect your data.

If you're told "Let us worry about that," it should ring alarm bells. You can't expect to keep your organization safe from a data breach or data theft if you don't know what you're trying to protect yourself from.

It's also important that your IT partner explains what they're doing. You really do want to have a basic understanding of how your infrastructure works or is set up for you. This will help you to help yourself when a minor issue occurs.

REASON TO SWITCH #9

THEY'RE ALWAYS PUSHING NEW HARDWARE

Many of our clients complain that their previous IT support providers spent more time pushing new equipment than they did on the fundamentals.

It's nice to have the very latest technology in your business, but it's certainly not vital. There are lots of other things to consider before upgrading equipment and devices. Especially today when value for money and return on investment are critical.

Of course, your business will need a certain level of equipment for you to operate the way you need to, but you probably already have most of the things you need. I find that for most businesses, it's far more important to get the infrastructure right before we even consider your hardware. Additional devices, for example, are sometimes nice to have rather than crucial.

A good IT partner will help you to create an IT roadmap, which should detail at which points in the years ahead you need to budget for upgrades or additional devices.

REASON TO SWITCH #10

INCOMPATIBLE FIT

The relationship between a business and their IT support is a partnership. Partnerships only succeed if both parties are a compatible fit. What makes a compatible fit?

- **There is a shared goal and vision. Discussions need to be had about the future of technology and the role it plays in the growth of your business and its future.**
- **Expectations for level service are agreed and recognized on both sides. Some clients hate to call for support and wait until issues pile up or things**

become unworkable. This might be a sign of poor support experience. Clients should always be comfortable contacting for support and IT support providers should ensure that all support experiences are positive ones for users.

- There is a clear demonstration of mutual respect. Mutual respect can take many forms. From an IT support standpoint that respect can be in the form of the support experience they provide. It can be in the form of clear communication on product updates, maintenance as well as considering the uptime and production periods of the business. From a client standpoint it can be clear communication on what are and are not emergencies. It can be clear communication on changes with vendors that might affect the IT infrastructure. It could be advance notification of new hires or terminations to ensure that the onboarding/offboarding experience for employees is as smooth as possible.**
- Trust is earned and not given and only grows as the partnership flourishes. The business transaction between a small business and their IT partner requires a great amount of trust. Much like a CPA or HR department, IT support can involve access to sensitive data and mission critical infrastructure. You can buy flowers from anyone but putting your trust in an IT provider to keep your business productive while staying secure requires a great amount of trust. Regular communication is key on both sides to make sure the partnership is always on the same page.**
- Price and costs are never a point of contention. The value of the service to the business is what's focused on. There's an old business joke that "someone will always do it cheaper" but it's much more than a joke. It is true. The question to ask is are you getting the most value out of the service being provided? Focusing on value rather than cost ensures that other factors beyond cost are key aspects of a solid partnership with IT support. Sizzler and Ruth's Chris Steakhouse both sell steaks. Which do you prefer?**



CHAPTER 4

Protect the most important thing
in your business

As we've seen over the past few years, being able to work anywhere, any time, on any device is great. We've been shifting to this way of working over the last 10 years, but in 2020 went faster.

This is the way many of us are working today, and that's how it's going to stay in the future, whether we're in a pandemic or not. Working flexibly like this means that businesses can reduce their costs; attract the best candidates for jobs; and have a happier workforce too.

But as our devices get smarter and more powerful, they're also becoming more disposable. As you know, you can do most things on your smartphone now. And how often do we lose or break them?

The thing is, because everything is stored safely in the cloud (that's the huge servers where you store your data, in multiple locations across the globe), if you lose your phone, it's no big deal. You simply get a new one and restore your files from your backup. Just like magic, you have a new handset that contains all the data your old one had.

A lost phone is now merely a minor inconvenience and a small financial cost. And it's not just phones this applies to. Your tablet and laptop work the same way.

This flexibility is amazing. However, it also has its risks. Number one being that any time you take your device away from the office, you're potentially opening up your data to anybody. The sad and scary truth is that there are countless gangs of cyber-criminals who are trying very, very hard to access your data. And even take it away from you.

You've probably heard about malware before. Malware, or malicious software, is code placed on a device or network with the aim of infecting, stealing, or corrupting your data. Essentially, a hacker can create malware to do exactly what they want, once it's within your network. It's a pain, because once it's there, it can take you a while to notice what's happened. And it can be tricky to remove.

But there's something scarier: Ransomware. This is actually the fastest growing cybercrime right now. And if you're not taking all the right precautions, it's likely that you will fall victim to this devastating form of cyber-attack at some point.

As the name suggests, ransomware is a kind of malicious software that encrypts your data so you can't access it. The hackers then literally hold you to ransom to regain access – you must pay a fee.

For example, they might ask for \$75,000 - in Bitcoin, of course - within 3 days. If you fail to pay, this fee doubles. If a week goes by, you can kiss your data goodbye forever.

Ransomware is terrifying. Trust me when I say that you want to avoid this at all costs.

And while absolutely anyone can become a victim of ransomware, it's usually small and medium sized business that are targeted. Cyber-criminals know this is a group that typically doesn't spend excessive time or money on cyber-security.

I don't want to bore (or scare) you with statistics, but it's worth you knowing it's estimated that 46% of businesses were attacked with ransomware in 2022. And while there are no figures yet, it's a safe bet to assume that figure will rise dramatically in 2023.

The most common way for ransomware to get on your device or network is by someone clicking a link in a suspicious email. And before your jaw drops that someone - especially someone in your own business - would be naive enough to click a link in a scam email, you need to know these emails are really sophisticated nowadays.

Yes, these emails will look like dead ringers for genuine emails from someone you know or expect, mail from the IRS, your bank, even a department within your own company. And they not only look like the real deal, but the email address may be a very close copy too.

These emails work because they ask you to do something relatively simple; click to update your details, for example. Even looking with a critical eye, it can be hard to spot that something is wrong.

Once that ransomware is installed, there's not always an immediate attack. In fact, it can take between 60 to 100 days for anything to happen. Sometimes even longer. That's for a number of reasons.

The longer a hacker lurks within your network, the harder it is for you to detect them. Usually, hackers enter through one device that's connected to a network. Then they investigate your network for other weaknesses. Better for them to have control over as many devices as they can. They can also make it virtually impossible to kick them out once the attack has started.

This is what makes ransomware so difficult to deal with. And it's why prevention is always better than cure.

You need to be aware of the signs of a hacker in your network. Both you and your IT partner should look out for them:

- **Unexpected new administrators appearing on your network Software**
- **Being disabled**
- **New software being downloaded**
- **Remote access sessions lasting for days at a time**

Of course, there are many technical things to look for; but that will give you a good start.

A good IT partner will always recommend everyone in your business has regular cyber-security training. After all, your people are your first line of defense from cyber-attack. Software alone won't offer a good level of protection. You need software and humans.

Understand this, though: You can never be 100% protected from malware, ransomware, and other forms of attack. That's impossible, because it's a non-stop game where the criminals are always inventing something new, and the data security world has to catch up.

It is possible to be 99.99% protected; but you may be surprised to learn that we don't always agree with going that far.

You see, when you lock down everything to make your data security watertight, what you can inadvertently do is frustrate and annoy your staff. They'll have lots of extra layers of protection to go through, more steps in an already busy workload, and more to remember.

And what that means in the real world is that they'll skip steps and look for ways to bypass security. Which actually puts your business more at risk.

Think of it like a door to an office. If you have seven big locks and a biometric scan just to open it, eventually, people will get frustrated and just prop the door open!

To remove the frustration and hassle, we use what we call "blended security," where we pull together several products and services, which work together to protect you.

It means fewer codes and passwords for your people, and a better level of security for your data.

And the greatest part is that every blend will be different, depending on the business it's for. That way we can customize security perfectly for each client, based on their specific requirements.



CHAPTER 5

Why you should be highly skeptical
of all IT support companies

You probably don't know, what you don't know about IT. Does that make sense?

I think that's a fair assumption for me to make.

And why should you concern yourself with the latest tech news, software, and support updates? You're too busy doing what you do best.

You probably already read your industry magazines, blogs, visit trade shows, go to conferences, and attend training... you're an expert in your field. That's what experts do. You certainly don't have the time to do all of that for your IT too.

Would you expect your clients to know as much about your area of expertise as you do? Of course not. That's why they hire you, isn't it?

The same goes for us.

We totally absorb ourselves in the highly technical, high speed, rapidly changing world of technology. We genuinely love it and pride ourselves on having a level of expertise that most people don't.

You'd be shocked how many people consider themselves IT experts, simply because they know their way around computers. However, in reality, great IT companies operate on a completely different level – with better knowledge, tools, and systems.

The biggest problem when it comes to IT support is that it's an unregulated industry. There's no governing body that people have to pass through to be allowed to call themselves an IT company. No industry standard that has to be met. No guidelines on how the business must operate.....YET.

Just about anybody... literally anybody... can set themselves up and say they're an IT company.

This is why I say you should be highly skeptical of all IT companies.

Without asking the right questions, you simply don't know if you're putting your trust - and the security of your business data - in the hands of a reputable, honest company.

Knowing that the industry is unregulated, we have aligned ourselves with and become proud members of the National Society of IT Service Providers <https://nsitisp.org>. I won't bore you with the details but it is a non-profit organization with a grassroots movement on the anticipation of government regulation that is coming in our industry.

We follow a code of ethics and provide proposed legislation to government entities to ensure that when regulation comes, we'll be ready.

So how do you avoid choosing the wrong IT company?

Firstly, look for solidity. You need to check they have the right qualifications, accreditation, and experience. Remember, it's an unregulated industry, so you really need to do the legwork if you want to end up with the best possible IT partner.

Next, you ask them some difficult questions.

You don't want to see your potential new IT partner squirm, but you do want to make sure that they are going to deliver what you need. And asking difficult questions is the only way to be sure that you're making the right choice.

ASK THEM: *"How quickly will problems be fixed?"*

Obviously, this one will depend on the scale of the problem, but you need to know timeframes based on severity. How long will it take your proposed IT partner to acknowledge your issue in the first place? How long do they expect it'll take to get someone working on the problem?

Look at different scenarios. If you can't access your software, how long should it take to get you logged in. How long could it take to get your business up and running if you suffer a ransomware attack?

You also need to understand the approach your potential new partner will take. Do they have processes and procedures they stick to when issues arise, or are they winging it? Can they tell you about the worst problem they've encountered and how they dealt with it?

Remember, it's not the problem that you're judging them on, but rather how they responded to it. This can tell you a lot about their professionalism, knowledge, and ability to remain calm in a crisis.

ASK THEM: *"What do you do proactively, to make sure my team have fewer interruptions?"*

Downtime is a business killer.

You'll have seen it for yourself at some point, either in your own business or one you were working for. The internet goes down, for example, and people can't access the software they need to do their jobs. The office descends into chaos.

Even those who aren't reliant on the internet stop doing what they're doing. The coffee machine goes into overdrive. Everyone forgets about their job for a while and makes the most of an unofficial break.

But then when things are up and running again, people don't immediately get back to business. Conversations are finished, systems are rebooted, everyone needs to regain their focus. And that often takes even more time. So, what should have been a 15 minute interruption loses you 90 minutes of work.

And that's if it's a minor problem.

What can your proposed IT partner do to minimize this downtime?

Will they be working away in the background, making the necessary checks to ensure that the majority of these little blips don't arise? Can they assure you that most updates and maintenance will be carried out outside of working hours?

Do they have any other solutions that will mean your business maintains productivity while essential work is taking place?

ASK THEM: *"Tell me about the specific people who'll be looking after us."*

Though it's a really important question, many businesses overlook this side of things when it comes to working with a partner.

It's really good to know about the actual people you'll be working with. The people behind the business.

How does your proposed IT partner assign your account manager, for example? Do account managers have an area of sector expertise? Do they match you on how your personalities may work together? Or do you simply get assigned to the person with the smallest workload?

Will you always be speaking to the same person? What happens if that person is on holiday or ill? Who will be doing your strategic IT reviews and building your technology roadmap?

Who do you talk to if you're not happy?

This question is a great way for you to get to know more about the company you're hoping to work with. But it's also a great way for you to figure out if their people are the right match for yours.

ASK THEM: *“How would you explain something deeply technical to me?”*

With this question, I’m not suggesting that you actually try to learn the ins and outs of building an IT infrastructure from the ground up. Rather, it demonstrates your potential IT support partner’s ability to explain things to you in English; not tech- speak.

Can they explain a really complicated, technical process to you in a way that you can understand? Do they get frustrated if you ask too many questions? Do they brush you off with ‘you don’t need to know the technicalities of that’?

It’s vital, if you are partnering with someone, that you can communicate with each other clearly, without any confusion or breakdown.

It also demonstrates their ability to educate you.

ASK THEM: *“How will you keep on top of the constant changes in my business?”*

It’s no secret that successful businesses deal with a lot of change. From adding new staff members, to tweaking the product or service you offer, it’s likely that your business is forever changing things. It’s the way we grow.

In fact, your business probably looks very different now to how it looked 12 months ago (even without the pandemic-related changes).

So how would your proposed IT partner cope with that? How much do they need to know about these changes? Will it affect what they’re doing for you?

It should. Let’s remind ourselves that you’re looking for a partner here, not just another supplier. It’s part of their role to be able to make recommendations based on how you’re working. To suggest better software to use, a smoother network, more appropriate security.

If they can’t keep track of how many people are working for you, or the ways you deliver your service, how can they suggest ways to grow, improve – and especially, stay secure? Look for a new partner that takes an active interest in the changes happening within your business. Perhaps even arrange regular

catch-up sessions to ensure they're on top of everything that's going on.

There are lots of other questions that you should be asking, but I feel these are the 5 that will tell you the most about your potential partner.



CHAPTER 6

What every IT support company
wishes you know about IT

Before you glaze over and flip past this chapter, I'll add my disclaimer here: I am not about to bore you with technical jargon or gobbledygook. Please do not panic!

What I am going to talk about are the basic things that – if every client knew them – would make our lives a lot easier.

#1: YOUR SETUP NEEDS CONSTANT MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE. IT IS NOT A ONE-OFF JOB

Computers and other devices ask you to update them all the time. And that's because things are constantly changing.

The same applies to your network and infrastructure. Software is always changing; operating systems are being tweaked; and hardware deteriorates. It literally never ends.

It's virtually unheard of in professional IT circles that an IT setup isn't constantly monitored and maintained. If you're not offered 24/7 monitoring and maintenance as part of your IT contract, run. You will start seeing issues before the ink on the contract is dry.

Most IT support companies do it all in the background and you simply never hear about it. In fact, a great IT support partner will spend a great deal of its time monitoring what's going on within your system, and fixing issues before you even realize you have a problem.

You'll simply never notice its going on. And really, that's exactly what you want; monitoring and maintenance you don't even notice.

#2: THE SUPPORT TRIANGLE IS LIKE THE HARDWARE TRIANGLE

This is a fun concept to learn about buying hardware.

Picture a triangle in your mind. The three equal sides of the triangle represent quality, price, and speed.

If you make one side longer, then all the sides will lengthen to keep the triangle together. For example, if you pick a faster computer, typically the quality and price will also increase.

IT support has an identical triangle with the same three sides: Quality, price, and speed. If you buy cheap IT support, it'll be slow and lower quality. And vice versa.

Ideally, you'll look at what you can realistically afford to spend on IT support and go with the top of your budget. That's because you understand IT support is actually an investment into your business. Get your IT setup and your business IT strategy right; and it makes hitting business goals so much easier.

#3: WE ASK FOR A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT YOU MORE THAN US

We don't want to work with people short-term.

We refuse to do ad-hoc work, and one-off crisis management.

We only want to work with businesses as part of a long-term partnership. Why?

Well, obviously, it's good for us to build our own business around long-term clients. It's a great business model if we're honest.

But the real benefit of long-term partnerships for us comes from the investment we're able to make in our clients. So that we know you inside out. It means we can:

- **Work more closely with you. Learn about your priorities and take an active part in getting you towards your goals**

- **Customize your infrastructure, security and IT strategy around where you're heading, rather than where you currently are**
- **Build an infrastructure and security strategy that grows with your business**
- **Keep you better protected, because we can take an honest and strategic approach when we work as part of a trusting partnership.**

When you work with someone on a short-term basis, it's impossible to do this.

A long-term partnership means we'll be as invested as you will be. Because we genuinely care about your business. If you're doing well, we are too.

#4: OUTSOURCED IS BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY. AND IT HELPS YOU ACCESS BETTER EXPERTISE THAN THE SAME SPEND IN-HOUSE

As you're reviewing your IT support, it's probably crossed your mind that you could hire an in-house employee.

There's a big downside to be aware of. When you have an in-house person, you're asking them to do several different specialized jobs, and support a huge number of people, all at the same time.

Someone that can do that without having some kind of breakdown would be hard to find! Certainly, they'd soon learn to cut corners, just to get home on time each day.

When you outsource this work, you might pay a little more than an in-house person. But you're gaining access to multiple people, with a broad range of skills and specialties. And they don't go home until the work is done.



CHAPTER 7

How to help your internal IT people if you have them

Sometimes, the businesses we work with have internal IT people or a senior member of staff who takes on responsibility for the IT, without actually having a background in IT themselves.

If that's you, then you should be scared. Terrified in fact.

Not because you don't have the skillset. But because if your IT goes badly wrong – I'm talking ransomware attacks or similar, large scale problems – the responsibility rests with you.

Luckily, there is a solution to protect both you and the business. It's called co-managed IT support.

You retain your in-house IT people. And we help them with whatever support they need, at whatever level.

The best way to describe our help is to imagine a ring donut, with your internal IT person in the middle.

Yes, it's a big donut!

They benefit from support all round:

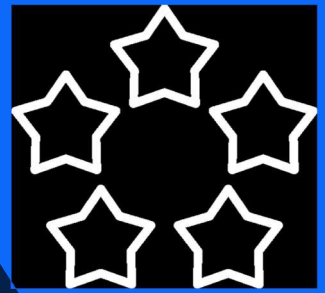
- **At the bottom: Help handling the low level stuff that's important but can be overwhelming. Such as being the help desk for your staff; monitoring the network; rolling out updates**
- **At the sides: Support at their skill level, to help them cope with workload, and have direct access to an experienced IT team to bounce ideas off**
- **From above: High level strategic advice and long-term planning**

Our job is to compliment your internal IT people. But add in the partnership and strategic overview. So there's plenty of high level thinking and support on tap.

This gets the most out of your internal resource. And also, fully protects you, as the person with ultimate responsibility.

Some IT managers see outsourced IT partners as a threat. We are not a threat.

Our job is to make you and your internal IT people look great and operate brilliantly. When you look great, so do we – we all win!



CHAPTER 8

Don't take our word for it:
Here's what our clients say

I've spent a long time in this guide educating you how to buy an IT support service. I've covered all of the bases, and by now you should really know what you want and need in your own IT partner.

But it's all very well me, the owner of the business, telling you how an IT support partner can literally change your business.

It's time you heard from some of my clients about the reality of working with us.

"Ron (C Solutions IT) has been providing IT services for my firm for the past fifteen years. His professionalism, knowledge, ability, and availability have greatly assisted my firm in developing our IT infrastructure and maintenance of network and devices. Ron is efficient, detail-oriented, organized and always open to discuss my concerns and responds to questions in a timely manner, making our business relationship both effortless and pleasant." – Independent

"Our agency is a non-profit that helps people with disabilities , to develop networks and support, promote self-reliance in all aspects of community life. For the past six plus years C Solutions IT understands our purpose and mission and how important it is that we can rely on them. Without fail, Ron and C Solutions IT has provided outstanding support and excellent services to our team consistently. Our ability to function using the newest and most innovative technology is essential to our providing the best quality customer service. We have the capability to continue to serve our consumers as a call center from home or anywhere else as we navigate through these changing times. Ron's irreproachable professionalism is consistent and I highly recommend C Solutions IT for any and all IT services. Executive Director, Non-profit, Rockledge, FL

**"Excellent IT support and easy to work with. They are always very responsive and keep my systems running smoothly."
- L. Walberg**

CHAPTER 9

About us

We love our clients. They always have such wonderful things to say about us.

Let me now properly introduce myself and my business.

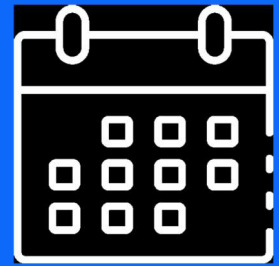
About C Solutions IT

Here at C Solutions IT, it is our mission to build lasting relationships with our clients. Since we love getting to know our clients, we thought you might like to know a little more about C Solutions IT.

Our President, Ron Cervantes, has been working with technology his entire adult life. He was born and raised in Wisconsin and went college there graduating with a degree in Business with a concentration in Management Information Systems. Ron eventually moved to Florida to work in IT for a transportation company. The IT dept had five people, after three years, it was just him. As the business grew the technology efficiencies allowed him to do more with less overhead. He continued in that role by himself for the next ten years. Ron managed thirteen remote locations with the main headquarters in Orlando, Florida. He supported 80+ users, most of them remote. It was within those ten years that he was able to pursue his master's degree in management information systems. As a child Ron always had an interest in being a teacher. Having a master's degree allowed him the opportunity to teach as an adjunct professor for an online university. He loved working with students who wanted to learn. During this time the transportation company he worked for was bought out and the headquarters moved to Texas. Ron shifted into a full-time instructor role for the next few years. Along the way he continued to keep one foot IT field helping local small businesses. He had supported a fairly large company by himself and therefore made sense that he could support several small businesses. He soon took on more and more businesses and decided to dedicate his full attention on growing C Solutions IT. He had loved his teaching experience and was able to use those skills to educate clients and take a guided approach to supporting clients.

C Solutions IT is your trusted small business partner for secure and compliant technology solutions. We pride ourselves on being high-level technology experts providing innovative technology support to businesses of all sizes. It is our mission to provide the best solutions to our clients promptly and professionally, every time! Our clients are at the center of all we do. We strive to understand the needs of our clients and take care of those needs with commitment, urgency, expertise, and assurance. Simply put, we provide “Peace of Mind”. We continually pursue both additional improvements and industry breakthroughs to better secure our clients and provide a better work environment for our team members.

Our team is personally invested in each and every business we work with, celebrating their success as if it were our own. Because really, it is. We're part of your company. We are your IT department.



CHAPTER 10

What will typically happen during your first 90 days

If you're ready to explore working with us, here's some important information you need to know.

When we begin to work together, the first 90 days are the most critical.

My team and I will be working on three key areas:

- 01 Learning as much as we can about your business**
- 02 Fixing any outstanding problems left behind by your old IT company**
- 03 Creating your technology strategy**

I hope and expect to work with you for years to come, in our partnership. So my goal in these first 90 days is to set you up for success.

You'll know what we can and can't do, with realistic expectations. What we need from you. And how to be a great partner.

We'll survey absolutely everything and examine every tiny part of your current IT setup. The more we know the better. All of the answers are fully documented in our secure systems.

We'll even ask about your website hosting and examine any specialized software you use. Even if we're not directly supporting these things, we still want to know how it works and who's supporting it. At some stage in our relationship, you're going to ask us about it. We need to know about every single service or third party vendor you're currently using.

Of course, it will mean there's a bit of work for you and your team. But I promise it will be worthwhile. And you'll only need to do it once.

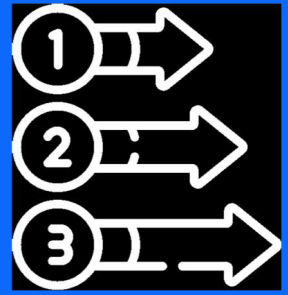
Once my team has all the information, they'll strategically analyze it. To make sure they understand every aspect of your technology. Any IT company that doesn't do this is simply not doing their job properly.

Then we're going to talk to your leadership and management team. Every single one of them.

We'll find out what their existing IT problems are; what frustrates them; and what makes their job more difficult. We'll also review anything your previous IT support provider told them couldn't be done, fixed, or created. There's no promise we can make it happen. But of course, we'll try.

Your first 90 days are going to reset everything. And then get your entire IT setup back up to the high level it needs to be (and where it will stay).

Then – and only then – you and I begin our strategic, forward-thinking work together. This is a unique process for every client. I can tell you more about it when we talk.



CHAPTER 11

What to do next

I hope you've found this guide useful, and it's covered many of the questions you've had about choosing a new IT partner.

Perhaps it's made you look at your IT systems, solutions and support in a different way?

Good news – we're currently taking on new clients again. That's why I wrote this guide.

I'd really love to talk to you about your business.

If you're serious about working with a new IT support partner to improve your business and contribute to long-term growth, this is your next step:

Book a 15 minute, no obligation video call with me at

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/CSolutions1@csolutionsit.com/bookings/>

You'll see my live calendar on that page.

You and I can check that our businesses are a good fit, and arrange a longer video call, or physical meeting (whichever is most appropriate at the time).

Of course, there's no obligation to buy anything, ever.

I'm looking forward to speaking to you and learning about your business.

**Ron Cervantes
Owner
C Solutions**

**Website: csolutionsIT.com
Email: help@csolutionsit.com
Phone: 407-536-8381**

This is how you can get in touch with us:

CALL: 407-536-8381 | EMAIL help@csolutionsIT.com



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