



## Managed IT Services: A Business Owner's Guide To Selecting The Right Partner In IT

No matter the type of work you're involved in, at some point, you need modern technology to make it happen. Whether that calls for a complex network of servers and other hardware, or a simple desktop set up and mobile connectivity, in either case, you need technology that works.

Do you have a reliable, expert partner managing your IT for you?



## What's The Point Of Managed IT Services?

Understanding the value of managed IT services means seeing past the marketing fluff. A lot of IT companies will make different claims about how managed IT services will “revolutionize your business” or “make your profits soar”.

While these may be true in some indirect, exaggerated way, they're not really useful ideas. Understanding the value of managed IT services starts with understanding what they are...



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# What Are Managed IT Services?

It's a good question. It's a common term that's used a lot but isn't strictly intuitive to those outside the IT industry.

Let's make it simple: Managed IT Services are a set of best practices, processes, and tools that, when combined with technical knowledge and proper facilitation, delivers an ideal IT-based result for businesses. Managed IT Services take care of everything IT-related for your organization, proactively preventing problems instead of fixing them after the fact. If you want to understand Managed IT Services and what makes them worthwhile, you just have to understand how they're different when compared to the way IT support used to work.

Not too long ago, all IT support was essentially reactive. These services were either called "hourly" support, or maybe "break/fix", but that's a bit of an industry term.

In either case, the way these services worked was that you brought in your hardware, or called a technician to visit you on site after something went wrong. Even in the best of cases, you still had to deal with the downtime that occurred while you waited for your broken IT to get fixed.

Managed IT Services address this core issue - instead of waiting for something to go wrong and then stepping in to correct it, an IT company that provides managed IT services takes on all the responsibilities of a traditional in-house IT department. This means working to prevent issues from happening in the first place - it's a much more effective approach. That's why managed IT services are more popular than ever.

- IT budgets have grown in recent years, with 44% of businesses planning to increase IT spending in 2020, up from 38% in 2019.
- The global managed services market is expected to double over the course of 2017-2023, from USD 155.91 billion to USD 296.38.

For many businesses, the cost of hiring even a single internal IT person is too expensive. They need a salary, training, benefits, vacation - it's a lot to budget for. That's not to mention that, while your IT manager is on vacation, someone has to cover for them, which means either paying for expertise again, or having someone unqualified fill in on a temporary basis, putting your systems at risk.

These are all reasons why fully Managed IT Services have largely become the norm, with service levels varying depending on the provider.



# What Should Managed IT Services Include?

## Cybersecurity Support

Cybersecurity is top of mind in the business world today. More and more breaches are occurring as cybercriminal tactics become more common and more effective.

There are two primary reasons why you need to start taking your business' cybersecurity seriously:

- The threat is real - It's estimated that the global cybercrime industry will cause up to \$6 trillion in damages in just a few years. Today, the average phishing attack costs businesses \$1.6 million, and the average ransomware payout is \$116,000.
- You're a target - It doesn't matter whether you're a big target for cybercriminals like Capital One, or a small organization - 43% of all breaches involved small businesses in 2019.

Data breaches are any form of intentional or unintentional exposure of your business data to unauthorized parties. It could be an employee mistakenly providing their login info on a fake website, or downloading ransomware from a phishing email (phishing is the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by disguising oneself as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication). Data breaches take many forms, and they're all damaging to your business' operations and reputation.

That's why your IT company should have a comprehensive plan detailing how cybersecurity gets addressed.

Their procedure must include:

- Employee cybersecurity awareness training
- Firewall settings
- Intrusion detection
- Intrusion prevention
- Encryption at the file level
- Intrusion Response Plan

## Infrastructure Management & Support

It may not be as exciting as cybersecurity, but administration for your infrastructure is just as important. Don't forget that your infrastructure is the backbone of your IT environment; it needs to be well maintained to keep your business functioning.

This type of support also covers your business' use of the cloud. With an IT company's assistance, your team can harness the strategic advantages offered by the cloud -- efficiency, agility, and scalability -- without taking on any risks that come with a poorly planned and executed migration.

Your IT company can manage cloud infrastructure by standardizing interactions between cloud environments. It also allows greater control over specific services to outsource while achieving interoperable cloud infrastructure management between consumers and service providers.

That's why all managed IT services should include basic server maintenance, network administration, storage maintenance, and typical network issues.

## Helpdesk Support

This seems like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many service contracts don't include Helpdesk Support, or do, but impose extreme limits of its use. It could be that hours of operation are only at specific times of day, or that any overage amounts to extreme additional charges.

Either way, it's worth checking to make sure that you're getting the support you need at a reasonable rate. You'll want to have access to support via phone, email, or an online ticketing system.

## Network Monitoring & Maintenance

Just as your infrastructure and staff need support, so does your network. Control plays a critical role, especially when you consider how network vulnerabilities can disrupt your network. You need to have a remote monitoring solution put in place and personnel responsible for tracking any suspicious activity and addressing it according to cybersecurity best practices.

## Data Backup & Disaster Recovery

Your IT company shouldn't only be concerned with supporting you while everything is working properly. They should also have plans in place to address your data and business-wide continuity in the event of data loss, power outage, inclement weather, or otherwise.

If your IT company uses the cloud for backup purposes, you'll want to know:

- How secure is their cloud backup solution?
- Is their backup hosted on a public or private cloud server?
- If they use a public cloud, will they consider using a private cloud for your backups?
- If your data won't get backed up in the cloud, where are the backups getting stored?

Furthermore, check the service agreement to make sure a disaster recovery plan comes standard. If it's not mentioned in the agreement, ask to have it added.

A comprehensive and detailed disaster recovery plan must be included so that when disaster strikes your business, you'll know you'll have

immediate access to your backups and a recovery plan that will get you back online quickly.

## VoIP & Business Communications

Traditional phone systems are a thing of the past. Landlines are expensive, rigid and inconvenient, which is why many businesses opt to modernize their services by merging them into a unified system. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) systems place your calls through the cloud instead of a traditional phone line, granting you greater connectivity, more features, and reduced costs.

Advantages include:

- **Efficiency:** VoIP provides your business improved efficiency by limiting issues that come from having to replace or fix phones, as well as complicated management of adding and removing employees. On traditional landline phone systems, you would have to wait lengthy periods of time for a phone to be replaced, or for a roll truck to fix issues. All this time spent waiting for a fix costs you money.
- **Reliability:** VoIP provides your business improved reliability by delivering a clear, seamless quality of phone service. This service can run on multiple internet connections, and can even extend to your smartphone. VoIP can work reliably through anything that mother nature may throw at you from hurricanes to snowstorms. Additionally, if you lose your business due to a fire, your VoIP phone service will still work.
- **Quality:** VoIP provides your business with improved quality through clarity of your calls. These calls come with a digital readout display, and the option to work without a headset. For those that still wish to use a headset, they can receive their calls through the use of a "softphone", which is software that allows users to make telephone calls through the internet on their computers.



## Virtual CIO Services

A vCIO executes all the duties of a Chief Information Officer, but as a cost-effective, outsourced service. It's their job to understand your organization completely and offer strategic IT planning, analysis, and overall IT management aligned with your business goals.

They're dedicated to finding ways to grow your business through new technology and technology-driven processes. By keeping an eye on both your business and the tech industry landscape, your virtual CIO can make sure that you are getting the maximum benefit from all of your technology investments.

## The #1 Problem With The Managed IT Services Model...

Market saturation.

What was once a revolutionary approach to IT support around 10 or so years ago has now become the status quo.

That means that so many providers offering it are doing so in a "one-size-fits-all" fashion, offering:

- Remote Monitoring
- HelpDesk
- Firewall & Antivirus

...and not much else.

No matter who they're working with, these IT companies come in, set up the same solutions, perform the same assessment, make recommendations, and then revert to the same

old remote support model that everyone else is offering.

This isn't to suggest that, with the right provider, this approach can't be useful. Proactive monitoring can certainly help to reduce downtime and system performance issues, especially when compared to reactionary, hourly IT support.

The problem, however, is that this rote approach to managed IT services fails to take advantage of what a fully managed model can really deliver.

## What Should You Look For In A Managed IT Services Company?

While it may seem easier to simply go with the first Managed IT Services company you look up on Google, or whichever offers the lowest rates – that's not going to help you succeed. As with any other business decision you make, it should be well-informed, and based on proper research.

All that depends on finding the right IT company, which you can't do if you only have their marketing materials to consult - so what questions should you be asking, and who should you be talking to?

## Do You Provide All The Services I Need?

This is a big part of finding the right Managed IT Services provider – some will only offer standard maintenance and monitoring, and some will offer a lot more. Possibly at a comparable rate, or even at the same price. The last thing you want to do is hire an IT company, and then realize that you need to hire a few more vendors and third-parties to cover the services they don't offer.

That's why BoomTech, Inc. offers all the IT services you require under one roof. Our team can handle:

- CyberSecurity management
- Cloud Services management
- 24x7 Monitoring
- Help desk Remote Support
- Onsite Support
- Alignment against best practice and standards
- vCIO Services Budgeting and a three-year strategic technology road-map
- Hardware & Software management
- Life-cycle management
- 3rd party vendor management
- Voice over IP Phone services
- And all your other technology needs...

No need to get your services piecemeal – which can be expensive. Instead, we will take care of everything for one reasonable fee.

## Will They Respond When You Need Help?

It should be relatively simple to find out if your IT company has a set response time. Either they offer a guaranteed response time as detailed in a contract, or they should at least be able to provide some form of data to show how quickly they handle real-life examples of support calls. It's a bonus if they have testimonials or case studies that show how they respond to their client's needs, and what the results were.

BoomTech, Inc. is proud to offer an emergency response time of one hour or less – guaranteed. We are also available to answer questions and solve problems that you have. You can expect a live person to answer your call. You can also enter a service ticket online if you don't feel like making a call.

However you communicate your issue, you can rely on us to tackle it quickly and thoroughly. We can often log into your PC or server remotely to resolve issues – so we may not even need to drive over to your place of business to assist you.

## Will They Help You Save Money?

Reducing IT costs is one of the most appealing reasons businesses use outsourced IT services. Businesses that choose to outsource can convert unplanned IT expenses to fixed, predictable ones. This frees up capital for other aspects of their business. Plus, it saves on hiring (and firing) in-house staff, paying benefits such as sick leave, health insurance, and Social Security.

BoomTech Inc.'s range of IT services is designed to minimize your tech costs, via proactive maintenance, quick response support, and expert insight into technology planning and future investments.

## Are Managed IT Services Right For You?

Selecting a company to maintain your technology is one of the most important decisions you can make for your business. You must find the most competent and reliable IT support provider in your area.

Don't just pick a company off the Internet because they're the closest one to you. Do your research to find out if they are truly qualified to protect your data and meet your organization's unique IT needs.

When you find the Managed IT Services company – a reliable partner who will work with you – you'll see the benefits firsthand.

