HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST IT SUPPORT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Providing Core Technologies for Business & Personal Productivity

As technology continues to get more complex and increasingly critical to core operations, many organizations are reevaluating their approach to technology management and IT support. They want a reliable tech partner to provide the best solutions and support to keep employees productive. They need an expert to update and monitor systems to prevent problems before they occur. The best technology partners are expert at both technology and customer service, place a premium on clear communication, and focus on the high-level strategic goals of your organization, as well as the day-to-day tactical well-being. Your tech partner should have a strategy for achieving stability in technology that they can clearly articulate and that goes beyond a claim of hiring 'the best' people.

If you are considering outsourcing your IT, there are hundreds of companies to choose from that, on first pass, appear to be offering similar benefits. However, there are some fundamental differences in the approach technology firms take and the services they provide, so we've put together a quick guide and checklist that will help you evaluate the pros and cons of each tech partner so you can find the right solution for your needs and budget.

First and foremost, ... Do they have a reputation for customer satisfaction and retention?

All customers want to have a great experience with their tech partner. Find out if the provider has a history of good customer service and   customer testimonials they can share. There are industry benchmarks that many companies use to track how their customer service   compares with other tech support companies, as well as net promoter scores that measure the customer's overall satisfaction with the   company's service. Sinu believes it is critical that a tech partner offers superior customer service and places the emphasis on your people.   Ask the provider for benchmarked customer satisfaction survey results to assess how their current customers rate their service.

How do they handle data security and data recovery?

Data security is a major concern and one of the top reasons many organizations are outsourcing tech support. Managed service providers typically include regular backup and data restore capabilities in their fee. Daily backup is customary, but will your provider back- up more often if needed? Is the data easily accessible should you require a restore? You will also want to ascertain how antivirus and anti-malware is implemented. Will it cause downtime during peak hours? What types of firewalls are included in the services? Some providers include software firewalls, appliances, or both.

Some considerations when comparing service plans include:
- ➤ Are antivirus and anti-malware solutions provided for each subscribed computer?
- ➤ Are email anti-spam and antivirus included for each mailbox?
- ➤ Does the fee include installation, configuration and monitoring of an enterprise-class firewall? Does it include a web filtering service?
- ➤ Can the provider document and implement IT Security policies and practices?

What email and communications solutions are included?

Some tech support partners will include email as part of an all-inclusive fee, while others will consider it an add-on. If email is included,   does the provider use one of the two major players in email – Office 365 or Google GSuite – or something else? How they handle anti-spam and anti-virus software for each mailbox and does the service include email backup and restoration? In the event of a disaster or other outage, will you still have access to your email?

What about technical support?

When you choose a tech partner, you want to be sure you're getting the best technical support available. If you need help on a Sunday morning, you want to be sure you can get it. Make sure your provider offers free support 24/7/365, and ask if they charge for on-site support should your needs require it.

Other questions to ask:
- ✓ Do they offer a dedicated account representative?
- ✓ Do they provide around-the-clock technical support?
- ✓ How do I reach the support department (by phone, email or live chat)?
- ✓ What is the average response and issue resolution time?
- ✓ What types of support is excluded from the service or costs more?

What remote services do they support?

With a growing number of employees telecommuting at least part of the time, either by working at home or on the go using devices, more companies are looking for secure mobility solutions that can often provide both cost savings and more efficient use of time and resources. To increase productivity on the go, you may want to ask about remote access to customer support, email, file share and whether they offer wireless synchronization and support for smart phones and tablets.

How do they manage and monitor the health of your solutions?

You can decrease downtime when you find a tech partner that can prevent problems before they occur. Continual monitoring and management of your network, email system and Internet connectivity is a must these days, and many providers will include this in their standard fee. You may also want to determine what kind of reporting they provide and whether it is something you can generate on- demand. Business Intelligence reporting, such as a full software inventory, network diagram, hardware replacement recommendations and compliance audits, are critical tools to help inform both your technology strategy and operating budget.

To learn more about Nucleus's all-inclusive tech management solutions, go to www.philadelphiaitservices.com or call 610-355-1980.

What is the fee structure?

Fee structures vary greatly when comparing outsourced IT. The real question is what does the fee include? Often, one provider may seem like a better deal, but then you may find that the basic services offered under a standard plan do not cover all your needs. Are there added fees for helpdesk support or onsite support? What infrastructure is included and what are you expected to purchase? Will they charge extra for intelligence reporting? We've provided a checklist so you can compare what each provider you may be considering includes in their fee and whether there are any additional costs you need to consider when making your decision.

What value-add services and premium options do they offer?

A tech support company that is interested in adding value to your organization and be a true all-in-one partner will often include or offer services that might surprise you. Some companies will offer CTO-level consulting to help you formulate policies, technology strategies, hardware replacement plans, and more! Some companies will even offer vendor relations support so that all technology solutions work together seamlessly.

An emerging service being offered by some technology management companies is Hardware-as-a-Service (HaaS). HaaS is increasingly joining Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) to help organizations avoid making large investments in technology solutions that must be re- placed on a faster and faster schedule. HaaS can also help cut costs by providing access to powerful software programs and the latest technology without the expense of a large IT staff and time-consuming, expensive upgrades. HaaS is typically offered for an additional subscription fee, with no upfront costs for the equipment. If the tech support company offers HaaS, ask what is included. Do they take care of the hardware, warranty and service for the life of the device? Will they replace it before the warranty expires?

We hope you will find the checklist on the following page a helpful tool as you compare the services provided by the different tech support companies you may be considering.

Tech Support Comparison Worksheet

Potential Tech Partners	ASG. Your IT Department.	Name of Company:	Name of Company:	Name of Company:
Average Cost	✓ Range: $75-$125 per person per month x_____people = $ _____			
Desktop Support	✓ Full-time, unlimited helpdesk / no charge for on-site as needed			
Email and Communication	✓ Office 365 or Google G-Suite			
Mobility	✓ Remote access to email, support, office desktop computer			
Customer Relations	✓ Virtual CIO, Relationship Manager, vendor relations, IT policies			
Backup and Data Restore	✓ Desktop and email backup included with option for laptops			
Antivirus and Antimalware	✓ For computers and email			
Disaster Recovery	✓ Data and email			
Hardware and Software	✓ Basic infrastructure covered, firewall included covered, firewall included			