



GREAT LAKES
Computer
Corporation

IT OUTSOURCING: The Secret Weapon of Successful SMBs



Outsourcing has been the secret weapon of successful business owners for many years. The knowledge that we each have a core competency is a fundamental tenet of effective outsourcing. If I do X better than anyone, and you do Y better than anyone, then I should have you manage my Y, and I'll manage your X, and we both end up at a higher level of performance. When we spend resources on supporting business functions, we take those resources away from the thing we're in business to do. Outsourcing allows everyone to focus on their core competency, creating better results for all.

If your business builds and sells best-in-class widgets, that is your core competency. The accounting, marketing, IT management, and even human resources administration associated with it are supporting functions. You may be able to do them, but are you as efficient, effective, and productive as someone whose core competency is that function? It's unlikely.

In the specific case of Information Technology hardware and software management, expertise is not only nice to have, it's a necessity. Relying on non-technical, internal personnel to handle computer, printer, and server needs, as many Small to Mid-Sized Businesses (SMBs) do, can have critical unintended consequences that can be costly to a business with an already limited budget.

In this eGuide, we answer the questions:

- p3** What is IT outsourcing?
- p4** How do you know when the time is right to consider it?
- p5** What IT services can be outsourced?
- p6** What criteria should you use to choose a managed provider once you've decided to outsource?



WHAT DOES IT OUTSOURCING MEAN?




IT outsourcing means allowing an outside IT expert – also known as a Managed Service Provider (MSP) - to manage, monitor, service, and/or maintain your information technology and/or your data flow. Think of an MSP as a big, enterprise-class IT department, with robust and powerful technology and an expert staff. Except instead of serving one company, those resources are shared among several businesses. This gives smaller companies access to the kind of hardware, software, and staff expertise they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford.

There are varying levels of Outsourced IT Support that companies undertake:

- Some businesses outsource only the routine and repetitive tasks, like network monitoring and printer maintenance, allowing their own IT department to focus on core objectives.
- Some businesses contract with a provider temporarily to complete special projects outside of the scope of their internal personnel.
- Many businesses use an MSP to handle all their IT needs.

WHY DO BUSINESSES OUTSOURCE IT MANAGEMENT?

There are plenty of reasons, and each business will have unique ones. Here are common situations that necessitate bringing on an MSP:

<p>Your business is growing, and your technology needs are getting greater than you have the time or ability to handle.</p>	 <p>You are an SMB that doesn't quite have the budget for a full-time staff member to manage your technology needs.</p>	
<p>Technology changes are so rapid that you don't have the resources to stay updated so you need an expert with access to the latest technology.</p>	 <p>You realize that your time is better spent on your core competencies than fixing your printers and updating your applications.</p>	<p>You have an in-house IT manager, but their time is better spent on growth projects over "putting out fires", monitoring, and maintenance.</p>
<p>You want to gain a technical advantage by leveraging new technologies to improve business functions and reduce costs.</p>	 <p>The rapid increase in data breaches has shown you how vulnerable your data is.</p>	<p>You are looking to make a change to your current IT network and need assistance with cabling, installation, setup, IT relocation.</p>

The most common issue faced by smaller businesses is how to manage and maintain their information technology while running the business at the same time. Whether it's server maintenance, printer supply ordering, or PC repair, it all takes time and expertise.

In-house IT professionals can be expensive, and the costs of hiring and employing a full-time employee can be daunting. Perhaps you even have an IT manager on staff, but how much time can they use to focus on the future when most of it is spent putting out fires?

Advances in technology, along with cloud-based services, have created powerful new tools that can help businesses cut costs and boost efficiency and productivity. Where the best technology was only accessible to large-scale enterprises that could afford it, the cloud and MSPs can help SMBs get access at a fraction of the price. That's why many small and mid-sized businesses are turning to IT service providers.

WHAT IT SERVICES CAN BE OUTSOURCED?



Desktop & Laptop Management

You want your staff to have the tools they need to do their job. Well maintained desktop and laptop computers give you the means to smooth operations and support your business' success. Proactive computer maintenance, comprehensive antivirus and antimalware data protection, and responsive Help Desk support let workers steer clear of technical problems and get on with the job at hand.



Server Management

Your computer network servers are the core of your IT system: You count on them to operate at 100 percent efficiency. With proactive computer system monitoring, patching, and computer maintenance, you get the peace of mind that your network servers are healthy and your computer data is secure.



Computer Network Management

Avoid problems before they arise by maintaining the critical components of your computer network - the backbone of your business. Preventative network support saves you time and money by by optimizing your network's performance and keeping risk to a minimum. A Managed Service will be there when you need them, with prompt response time and outstanding customer service.



Managed Print Service (MPS)

If your office relies heavily on printing, MPS can be an extremely valuable service. An initial print assessment is conducted to determine your printing needs. Printer use is monitored to ensure printers are being operated at ideal levels, not underutilized. Regular maintenance of printing hardware ensures your printers last, increases uptime, and reduces the need for repairs. Automated supply monitoring and ordering means you don't have to worry about toner levels and printers sitting empty. Managed Print Services can reduce your annual print-related expenses up to 30%.



Network Security

Protecting your data and information from disruption is critical. Downtime in today's world equates to lost money and lost customers. Ensuring your data is secure from theft is also critical. An MSP will optimize your network to run at peak performance and provide immediate assistance when you need it most.



Antivirus and Firewall

With an unprecedented level of cyberattacks occurring daily, a strong defense is vital to protecting your business data. You need powerful products for detecting and eliminating dangerous viruses and malware. These safeguards need to be monitored and regularly updated as well.



Data Backup & Recovery

Backup is one of the most critical protections you can have, yet it is the most overlooked component of security. Unfortunately the only true protection against disaster, data loss, and theft, is robust backup and recovery. Having this in place allows you to recover from any data event quickly and simply, with minimal loss. Backup and Recovery is the only true protection against data loss.



Cloud Solutions

The cloud is the way of today. Hosting your data and apps in the cloud creates built in backup and recovery, without adding extra hardware. The cloud also allows for data mobility, allowing your team access where and when they need it, enhancing productivity. And, you typically only pay for what you need on a month-to-month basis, eliminating large expenditures on hardware. Whether you are installing a few cloud apps, like Microsoft 365, or a complete cloud solution, your MSP can help with choosing the right plans, completing installation, and training your employees with ongoing support.

HOW TO CHOOSE A MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER

Trust is hard, especially when it comes to business - everyone has their own skin in the game. Choosing to outsource functions of your business is never a decision to take lightly. You are granting access to an outsider under the assumption they will protect your interests as well as you would. Some of the most common functions to outsource are IT related because of the technical experience required. Here are the top 6 things you should consider when choosing an IT Managed Service Provider (MSP).

1 How long have they been in business?

While time is not always a strong predictor of performance, in IT it is more valuable than you'd think. Longevity indicates the MSP has evolved its offerings over time and kept current with the latest technologies.

2 Are they forward thinking?

Do they offer services that tie into current IT trends? Cloud computing is a necessity even if you're not ready to migrate yet...you'll need it eventually. You need an MSP that can help you keep your network data flowing regardless of the higher demands today's many devices require from it.

3 Do they offer on-site presence in the event it's needed?

The beauty of many managed services, like cloud computing and server monitoring, is that they can be conducted remotely and automatically. But, if you need someone to be in your office in the event of a malfunction or disaster, can they be there? If you are local to your MSP, how quickly can you expect service?

4 Do they offer a wide range of services that you need or may need in the future?

You can choose separate providers for different functions, but it is certainly more convenient if you can go to one trusted provider for your servers, computers, printers, data storage, and security. That allows them to get the total view of your systems and potentially can allow for better pricing options.

5 Can they offer testimonials or references?

This is generally a good practice when hiring any vendor. Of course, you run the risk the references come from friends that would never speak ill. Read between the lines. Look for details about how available and how responsive their service techs are. Often, IT support services are the most imperative in emergencies, especially when there is potential for down time. An MSP can have a laundry list of services, but that doesn't mean they are top-notch service providers.

6 Do they put an emphasis on data and cyber security?

Security is the name of the IT game. While computers and the internet have certainly increased our productivity and speed, they have also created an inherent vulnerability. Your MSP needs to have a range of security offerings, like backup and recovery and antivirus, but also needs to have stringent internal security as well. You need to be certain they are not leaving a backdoor open into your valuable data.

If you ask these questions and find yourself satisfied with the answers, then you've probably found a Managed Services Provider you can trust.

Great Lakes Computer has been in business for over thirty-five years. We have a roster of clients willing to tell you how much they value our service. We are extremely responsive, and our Help Desk is available day or night. We offer a range of services from Managed Print to Cloud Computing to Backup and Recovery.

We can also help with issues like HIPAA compliance and digital forensics. We keep ahead of IT trends to ensure our clients have all the IT support they may need. Your security and productivity is our main focus.

Let us worry about your IT, so you don't have to.



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