

It makes sense to move to Managed IT Services: Here's why

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Imagine your business running smoothly, with IT issues taken care of before they can disrupt your workflow. That's the promise of Managed IT Services, a proactive approach that takes the burden of IT management off your shoulders.



Think of a Managed Service Provider (MSP) as your dedicated IT team. Whether you have an in-house IT team or not, managed services offer significant advantages.

What are Managed IT Services?

Managed IT Services takes a proactive, security conscious, cost efficient and forward-thinking approach to IT in a business. The delivery of this approach is handled by a Managed Service Provider (MSP). In the same way that a business would use an accountant for accounting matters or a lawyer for legal matters, businesses use MSPs to look after their IT.

Companies that have an in-house IT professional or department also make use of MSPs to supplement their ability to execute. Where an in-house IT professional is focussed solely on the business, MSPs bring their collective expertise across multiple businesses to the table. While MSPs typically niche down in one sector, they often operate in multiple verticals and therefore stay up to date on technology in general.



Proactive

With the right professional looking after your IT, and with the right tools, most IT issues can be anticipated and proactively resolved before they cause a disruption. Many IT problems are simply the result of poor housekeeping – such as patch management and software updates; or a lack of attention to dated hardware and infrastructure. Sometimes, a software vendor may release an update only to discover a bug that becomes apparent when updating computers en masse. By taking a proactive approach, an MSP will look after all aspects of housekeeping, including testing software updates before any bugs enter your ecosystem.

Proactive maintenance by an MSP typically includes 24/7/365 monitoring of all systems and online hardware. This includes cyber security, ensuring that you are always protected with the latest defences. There is no such thing as 100% safety online, however an MSP will get you as close to that mark as possible.

You may be wondering if housekeeping and software updates can be self-managed, and indeed, they can be. However, without having a dedicated resource overseeing these elements you run the risk of losing track or installing buggy updates. Having an MSP take care of things will greatly reduce the number of IT support incidents that you experience.

Security conscious

The cyber security threat landscape changes every second of every day, and robust security has become the essential foundation for technology in every business. It is overwhelming to consider every tool necessary to build a resilient infrastructure, and it is difficult for businesses to discern exactly what it is that they need. There is also the potential for a false sense of security – for example, taking data backups but never actually testing the integrity of those backups.

MSPs take a layered approach to cyber security which includes backups, hardware, software, and end user training, offering expertise that goes beyond the basics. MSPs leverage their experience and access to cutting-edge technologies to deliver adaptability. As such, security is deeply embedded in everything that an MSP does.



Cost efficient

Managed IT Services can be delivered in many ways, and the differentiator is the predictability of cost. To this end, an MSP's goal will always be to move their clients to "fully managed" services – where the MSP bills a flat rate per user or per device, for a comprehensive bouquet of services. However, MSPs are typically flexible when it comes to billing arrangements and accommodate different client requirements. Service level agreements such as turnaround time or hours of availability also influence the cost.

The key to understanding cost efficiency is largely found in the cost of IT support. MSPs that offer fully managed packages ordinarily include either unlimited support, a cap on support hours, or a specific inclusion/exclusion list. Project work (ad hoc work that is not strictly IT support) is normally billed separately. Apart from that, almost all services offered by an MSP can be bundled into a predictable monthly cost.

It may be tempting to bundle things like cyber security and software licensing, and then pay for IT support on an ad hoc basis. Consider, however, that in the event of a complex IT support issue or cyber breach, the costs can mount quickly. Another important aspect every business needs to consider is whether or not their line-of-business software (for example, an accounting or ERP system) is supported. Line-of-business software usually requires a much deeper skillset, and an MSP out of niche may not be able to provide that support. Either way, working with an MSP is most cost efficient when agreeing on what is included or excluded from the managed service offering at the outset.

Forward-thinking

Every business upgrades their hardware at a different rate. Some users have fewer IT problems than others and tend to get into a comfort zone with their computers, especially when their machine is serving them well. While having fewer IT problems is ideal, without a forward-thinking approach to IT support these users can be left behind with the maintenance, and more importantly, the security of their computers. Because MSPs serve a wide array of clients, they are at the forefront of technology and can proactively keep a business up to date.

Moving to Managed IT Services is a strategic investment in the future of any business. By partnering with the right MSP, a business can focus on its core competencies and drive business growth with confidence, knowing IT is in safe hands.

Technology Partners is a leading Managed Service Provider (MSP) in South Africa. To learn more, visit www.technologypartners.co.za



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