



# Guide to Providing the Best IT Support for Your Business

How to determine the best technology service model for your business, including when to insource, when to outsource, and when to use part time resources.



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# 1

# Introduction

For a business to thrive in today's technology-dependent environment, it is essential to have an IT service or support team that is able to keep pace.

A business's needs invariably change over time as the company grows and develops, and technology should be leveraged to support rather than hinder this process. Increasingly, smart business owners are taking their technology ever more seriously, and selecting a technology service model that aligns with their goals is an integral part of this process.

Determining the best technology model for your organization can seem intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. Insourcing and outsourcing each have their own merits, and sometimes even a hybrid of the two can represent the best choice for your business. In this guide, we will untangle the options to provide a clear picture of which model is best for your individual needs. No two companies are the same, so it is important that you assess every option available to you in order to make an informed decision that will help your business to flourish in the long-run.

# 2

## Assessing your current IT support

If you're reading this guide, chances are that your current IT support isn't living up to your expectations.

Whether you rely on in-house resources or an external provider, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of your current team so that you can determine if it's necessary to make a change. Although the disruption of transitioning to a new support model may be a deterrent, it is sometimes an essential move to ensure that your business isn't being held back by ineffective IT. Here are some telltale signs that you need to reexamine your current IT support.

- **Lack of capacity:** Does your current IT support struggle to maintain your software and systems? Are they too busy to finish, or even start, new projects? If you answered yes to either of these, they likely cannot bring the resources required to support your business technology.

- **Lack of proactivity:** Do you find yourself having to research the latest technologies in order to make suggestions to your IT team, rather than the other way around? Are the same problems happening again and again? Whether it comes down to a lack of time and resources or simply a lack of care, if your IT support favors reactive over proactive solutions, it's definitely time to switch things up.
- **Lack of ability:** Whether in-house staff or an outsourced service vendor, you should be able to rely on your IT team for strategic advice and plans of action, and they should be capable of optimizing your IT to meet the needs of your organization. If this isn't the case, then outsourcing to an expert IT services firm might be the right fit for your business.
- **Lack of follow-through:** It is essential that you hold your IT support accountable for their work. If they say they will do something, do they follow through? When they do, are the systems and software they implement functional? If not, you should consider finding a new provider who will deliver on their promises.



# 3

## Determining the right IT service model for your business

When it comes to IT services, there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

It is therefore important that you consider the specific needs of your business before deciding which technology service model is right for you. For many businesses, the dilemma will be whether to expand their IT support by hiring internal staff or outsourcing to external experts. To help you make sense of this, let's take a look at the pros and cons of the four primary business technology service approaches.

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### **Inourced IT Support**

Inourced or internal IT support refers to IT that is taken care of entirely in-house. Depending on the size of your company, this may be a single employee who takes responsibility as a tech lead, or a team of people who look after all aspects of IT.

## Pros

- The business has direct control over hiring, firing, and managing the team resources.
- Internal resources can be used in other business areas.
- They can work more informally with the staff, office equipment, processes, and business priorities.

## Cons

- An internal IT team's main function is often software engineering, not professional IT support. In the absence of a dedicated IT team, these duties may even be the secondary responsibility of someone from a different department.
- They need constant retraining to stay current with developments in technology, cybersecurity threats, and compliance requirements.
- All business IT tools, cybersecurity tools, technology certification and training need to be purchased by the business with no scaled price management.
- An internal IT team member needs to be led by a manager who is knowledgeable in keeping technology professional, secure, functional, and productive.
- The professional IT career ladder is limited, causing high team turnover.
- A lack of cross-trained IT professionals could result in single points of failure or knowledge risks.
- They're often overloaded with tasks and unable to keep up with changes in the business.
- Support is usually only available during office hours; 24-hour support requires three or more employees.
- They may lack a best practices framework for reporting and dealing with failures or security breaches, and therefore impede regulatory compliance.
- It's difficult to measure their effectiveness, and employment regulations may limit your options if they underperform.

## Outsourced IT Support

Outsourced or external IT support may refer to an IT service firm hired on a one-time basis or on a longer-term contract to handle most or all of your business's technology requirements. Here, we will focus primarily on the pros and cons of the latter.

### Pros

- Outsourcing is far cheaper over the long term than expanding your headcount to hire and train employees.
- A professional IT services firm will have multiple specialists with access to a wide range of resources that replace the know-how of an entire internal IT department.
- The best IT service firms invest in their own training and development to stay current with the latest trends in technology, security, and regulations.
- Scalability is simple: just expand your service contract to meet your demand; no need to add internal headcount.
- Budgeting is predictable because professional IT service firms offer monthly flat-rate service plans.
- Compliance is faster/easier with a well-matched IT service firm helping you meet your obligations.
- An IT service firm's performance can be tracked through regular detailed reports, ensuring ROI expectations are met
- The best IT service firms base their delivery on documented industry and technology best practices.

### Cons

- The initial selection process requires research and vetting.
- They may not always be available in person, meaning a potential lack of control.



- It may seem harder to build trust and confidence in an external provider.
- They may prioritize other clients over your business.
- The perceived cost may seem higher than hiring internal support.

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## Part-time IT Resources

Rather than hiring an outsourced IT provider on a fixed monthly rate, some businesses choose to enlist an external provider on an ad hoc or part-time basis.

### Pros

- You only pay when services are required, for example in reaction to failures, which means you could cut costs.
- This model is good for performing predictable, repetitive tasks.
- It can also be effective for completing challenging, one-off projects.
- Very small organizations may only need minimal access to professional IT support, making it more cost-effective to outsource than to train in-house employees.

### Cons

- Unpredictable month-to-month costs make budgeting difficult.
- If you require complex or time-consuming services, you will have to pay out of pocket.
- You may need to book a time slot for fixes, meaning that you won't receive support in a timely manner.
- This model may discourage lasting resolutions and preventative measures, as these could lead to loss of future business for the provider.
- This approach is, by nature, reactive rather than proactive, and therefore lacks strategic focus.

# 4

## Signs that an outside IT service partner could benefit your business

As you can see from these four different models, there are various benefits and drawbacks to each.

However, for many small and medium sized businesses, outsourcing to a professional IT service firm tends to offer the best cost-benefit solution in the long-term.

Making the decision to hire external IT support can be daunting. Many people are drawn to the seemingly safer option of hiring a new IT person. Your business may seem to be operating just fine, making it difficult to justify the extra cost of outsourcing. However, many organizations don't realize their IT is underperforming.

They learn to live with interruptions, low productivity, and high levels of risk. They underestimate the corrosive effect this situation has on their customer and employee satisfaction levels. From the long term perspective, fully functioning and well-supported technology can save you and your employees countless hours and headaches, while ensuring a smooth experience for your customers that will keep them coming back.

## Here are some signs that your business could benefit from outsourced IT support:

- ✓ **Cybersecurity risks:** Do you suspect your company is vulnerable to hacking or malware? IT service firms can apply a wide range of security measures, from firewalls and email filters to antivirus applications to access controls. And the best IT service firms provide employee security awareness training, crucial in this age of phishing/ransomware attacks.
- ✓ **Data disasters:** Has your company suffered a data loss event? Are you confident one can be prevented? An IT service firm can automate backup and recovery processes that ensure your data is stored in multiple locations and easily retrieved after any kind of downtime. They can also provide business continuity – a systematic return to operations during a data loss event.
- ✓ **Ineffective protocols:** Do you have protocols in place that your employees are ignoring, or simply can't follow due to a lack of training or resources? An IT service firm can put the necessary frameworks in place to ensure that essential protocols are adhered to. This will help prevent security breaches while saving you money in the long run by building an effective, organized, and efficient workforce.
- ✓ **Remote work challenges:** Has the shift to working from home highlighted your lack of collaboration tools? It can be a demoralizing experience for staff to move from a lively office space to working alone, especially if they're using systems that aren't fit for purpose. An experienced IT service firm can guide you to the best software and systems to boost productivity and morale.
- ✓ **Stumped by software:** Do you need to implement new applications but don't know where to start? A dedicated IT provider will not only set everything up for you, but also teach your employees how to get the most out of the new tools.
- ✓ **Compliance obligations:** Does your business need to satisfy government or industry regulators? Many IT service firms specialize in common protocols like NIST, HIPAA, and PCI DSS, and can help you achieve and maintain compliance much more easily than if you go it alone.

# 5

## Does your business *actually need* additional IT support?

In most cases, there will be an IT service firm out there with experience in your specific industry who will be able to address your pain points and implement strategies to support your long-term growth.

By hiring a service provider with a proven track record of helping organizations similar to your own, you can relax in the knowledge that your business's IT needs will be covered.

In order to determine what's right for your business, here are some essential questions to ask yourself:





## **Does it make sense to invest financially in IT?**

When answering this question, it is wise to take a cost-benefit approach. How will the upfront cost of investing in more IT support pay off in the long run? Ineffective IT can result in a whole host of problems for your business. Slow or malfunctioning systems can take valuable time out of your employees' days. Data loss or breaches can cripple your operations, while potentially causing clients and regulators to lose faith in your business. An IT service firm could boost your productivity by implementing functioning and efficient technology, and save your business's reputation by implementing solid cybersecurity measures.



## **Do you need a break-fix IT provider or something more proactive?**

If your IT needs are limited to needing to fix technical issues on an ad hoc basis, then a team or individual who deals in simple break-fix scenarios may be adequate. However, if you feel that IT is holding your company back from growing and thriving, you should consider hiring an experienced IT service firm who can offer both 24/7 support and trusted advice.



## **Do you need an experienced IT partner to guide you?**

Whether you lack IT know-how or simply lack the time to implement solutions, an experienced IT partner will be able to work with you to design and implement a customized technology roadmap for your business. A good IT service firm should be capable of fixing the issues mentioned above, but an exceptional IT service firm will provide guidance on how to use new and existing technologies to grow your business.



## Do you need an expert on a particular software application or system?

Installing new software can be confusing, let alone learning how to use it. While it's easy to find IT service providers who are familiar with common programs, it may be harder to find a specialist with expertise in your niche. If you need someone to develop an internal resource or to guide you through a particular software application, such as SAP/Salesforce, it is advisable to find an IT service firm with a proven track record in your desired systems.



### Still unsure whether you need additional support?

Take our online [Business Technology Effectiveness Test](#) to help determine whether your current IT is meeting your needs.

# 6

## How does Managed IT Services pricing work?

Once you've decided that hiring an IT service firm to provide external IT support is right for your business, your first question will probably be about pricing.

Managed IT services tend to be priced using a monthly flat-fee model, although "a la carte" services may also be available. Within the fixed-fee model, rates are usually calculated on either a per-user or per-device basis.

The price will vary depending on the complexity of your systems and the size of your business, and can be scaled up or down based on your current projects and aspirations. Below, we take a look at some of the key factors that will affect your pricing.

- Number of users
- Number of servers and endpoints
- Number of physical locations
- Your existing internal IT support, if any
- Your operating systems and applications
- Your position in the cloud migration process
- Your security requirements and compliance obligations

are sometimes offered in tiers, with varying support features and pricing in each level. Rival service providers may use similar descriptions, for example, “Gold, Silver, Bronze,” but the included services will likely differ significantly. It is therefore important to ask them exactly what their monthly plans include, and what they do not.

Always remember to confirm exactly what is included in any managed service contract before signing it. This will save you from discovering any surprise fees, exclusions, contract clauses, or other hidden costs down the road.





# 7

## What to consider when choosing an IT service firm

As well as scrutinizing the pricing model of a prospective IT service firm, there are a number of other points you should consider.

By putting in the research and asking the right questions, you can ensure you hire the right provider and save yourself time and money in the process. Here are some essential traits to look for in an IT service firm.



### Sound Protocols

You need an IT service firm who you can trust to fix problems efficiently and who acts fast in a crisis. Be sure to select a provider who offers clear guidelines on response times, prioritization of tasks, training for employees, security testing and monitoring, and disaster recovery planning.



### **Rigorous Documentation**

Strong documentation procedures are essential for monitoring and resolving your ongoing technical issues and remedying inefficient workflows. Documentation also allows you to keep track of the work being carried out by your IT service firm, which, in turn, lets you monitor how they are benefiting your company.



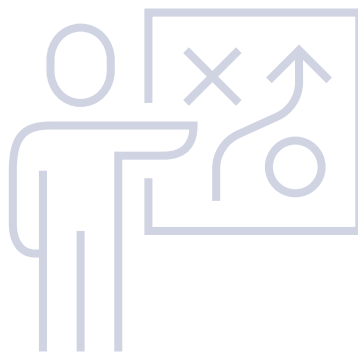
### **Forward Planning**

The IT service firm should not only respond quickly to issues as they arise, but also be proactive in implementing changes that will benefit your business in the long run. Select an IT service firm who you are confident will work with you to achieve your goals through annual IT budgeting and regular consultation.



### **Specialization**

Try to select a dedicated IT service firm with a track record in your particular industry or specialization. They are most likely to possess invaluable knowledge on the best industry tools and software for your specific needs.



# 8

## Questions to ask a prospective IT service firm

Once you have narrowed down your search to a handful of potential IT service firms, it's time to get into the finer details of their services.

You will be working closely with your chosen provider, and they will be tasked with protecting your most valuable data, which makes trust essential in your partnership. Here are some key questions to ask in order to put your mind at ease:

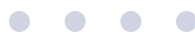
- ? How do you provide guidance and advice on business and technology?
- ? How do you document and measure the delivery of your services?
- ? What are your response times?
- ? Do you offer round-the-clock technical support and monitoring?
- ? How will you proactively support the growth of my business?
- ? Do you provide off-site backups? How regularly?
- ? What are your disaster recovery protocols?
- ? Does your insurance policy cover errors and omissions (E&O)?
- ? Can you provide client references and case studies?
- ? What is included and not included in your fixed rate?

# 9

## What does an “exceptional” IT service firm look like?

The IT service market is flooded with inexperienced MSPs (Managed Service Providers) and companies offering IT as an add-on service rather than their main focus.

While some of these providers might be able to provide a baseline service, why should you pay for anything less than exceptional? Most businesses rate their IT service as “fine” when it is actually “bad,” and very far from exceptional. This is simply because they have become conditioned to underperforming IT and don’t realize the compromises they are making. To understand what defines an exceptional service, compared to just “fine,” check out the examples in the next page.



EXAMPLE	BAD	FINE	EXCEPTIONAL
<i>When you call for support on a business technology issue...</i>	You have to leave a message and don't get a call back.	You have to leave a message, and get a call back between 2 and 48 hours later.	You <b>immediately</b> speak with an engineer who can resolve your problem <b>within 60 minutes</b> .
<i>Best practices</i>	They don't have any.	They follow general practices, but not tailored to suit the client.	Their practices are tailored to the client with an actionable roadmap for successful outcomes.
<i>Delivery of on-site services</i>	On-site service requires additional cost.	On-site service is included, but needs to be scheduled.	On-site service is performed as needed at no additional cost.
<i>Technology advice</i>	They're trying to sell you another one of their services.	You have to raise the agenda; the IT service firm operates as a vendor, external to your business and not interested in your outcomes unless you make a request.	The IT service firm offers proactive planning and reporting on your efficiency, effectiveness, and security. They operate as a stakeholder in your business, not just a vendor.
<i>Team efficiency and effectiveness with business software</i>	Business applications are ignored by the IT service firm – you're sold an application that they don't support.	They install the application, but your teams aren't trained or supported on how to use it.	The IT service firm takes ownership by ensuring your teams are well educated and supported in the use and best practices of software solutions, to help them perform their jobs better.
<i>Cybersecurity</i>	Cybersecurity tools are offered at additional cost.	Cybersecurity tools are included but generic for all clients, not customized to suit your business needs.	Cybersecurity tools are included and customized based on best practices, your industry, and your unique business needs.
<i>Data security</i>	Data protection is not in place, or lacks proactive maintenance, testing, and reporting.	Data protection tools are in place, but with no customized recovery plan to reduce your business impact.	Data protection is in place, and your recovery is planned and documented, ensuring minimal business impact.
<i>Infrastructure maintenance</i>	They react to failures, restoring functionality after they are called.	They perform regular on-site "fix-it" days.	Best practices are tested, proactive work is regularly scheduled, and recommendations are documented and reported.

# 10

## The Leverage IT difference

Founded in 2001 by a team of passionate business and technology professionals, Leverage IT exists to help businesses thrive in the modern, technology-dependent market.

Our dedication to improving our clients' businesses as well as our focus on long-term relationships has seen us become the leading technology services provider in the Sacramento and Reno metropolitan areas.



At Leverage IT, you can rest assured that we have your business's best interests at heart. We guarantee this through:



**Transparency**

We provide detailed reports on both the state of your IT and the effects of our services, for complete visibility and better decision-making.



**Best Practices**

Our team doesn't stop at fixing what is broken – we teach our clients best practices for planning and budget management, so their IT meets and exceeds their goals. You can learn more about how to implement best practices at your company through this [webinar](#).



**Results**

We believe technology should always be adding to a business, and we're committed to making sure that it does. We have a proven track record of delivering on this promise.

As well as these core competencies, our clients can expect:



**Fast response times:**

We guarantee a defined response time for all support requests. Critical and high priority requests are responded to by a professional IT Engineer and often resolved in 60 minutes or less.



**Client Satisfaction:**

Don't take our word for it – read what our clients have to say about us in the next page.



**Fixed monthly costs:**

Our fixed monthly rates mean you won't have to deal with any unexpected fees.

Our process-driven approach to IT cultivates best practices and focuses on strategy. When we analyze your technology, we won't think "what's wrong?," but rather, "how can this better help the business?"

We'll share the technical knowledge that we have accrued over our 18 years of operation so that you can better understand your technology and how it can best be used to promote your growth.

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## Don't take our word for it.

### “ Leverage came up as a top contender

"It was really easy to tell right away how above and beyond Leverage go, and how detailed they are in project and ticket management. All their feedback is so important - we weren't getting that with our other provider and it's very refreshing."

**Karin Fisk**  
Manager of Systems & Projects, Mary's Gone Crackers, Inc.

### “ Ongoing Project Management and Budget Tracking

"We have zero downtime because we are in public safety. Leverage IT came in and started working quickly to understand our needs, the scope of the project, and its complexities. That coordination was really important and also helped with our budget tracking."

**David McPartland**  
Captain, The City of Berkeley Fire Department





To find out how you can leverage your IT with our customized service plans, book a call with our Principal, Eric Baryol, by clicking on the link below, or by contacting our office directly on the numbers below.

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