



EBOOK

Make Office Life Easier With Managed Services





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Introduction

Every business runs on IT. Even the smallest firms depend on a mix of laptops, phones, email, cloud apps and industry software to get anything done at all.

It is worth thinking about for a moment. Could you do your job without a computer? Without email? Without your phone? These things have become so ordinary that most of us only really notice them when they stop working.

And they do stop working. No IT setup runs perfectly all of the time. Whatever you are using, from the five year old laptop in the corner to a brand new cloud platform, something will go wrong sooner or later. Maybe it is a file that will not open when you are halfway through a report. Maybe a machine refuses to start on a Monday morning. At the worse end of the scale it could be ransomware working its way across the network. The real question is what happens next.

Larger organisations often have an in-house IT team to deal with all of this. For most small and medium sized businesses that is a lot of salary to carry. Vendor help desks are an option, but anyone who has spent forty minutes on hold only to be told the problem sits with somebody else knows how that tends to go. They do not talk to each other, they do not know your setup, and they rarely get to the bottom of anything.

Getting problems sorted quickly matters, particularly when they are stopping people working. Every minute a machine or a connection is down has a cost attached, even if it never appears on an invoice anywhere. One widely quoted figure puts the average cost of IT downtime at between **\$137 and \$427 a minute** for a small business, which is roughly £110 to £340, and considerably more for larger organisations.

IT has also become more complicated. Twenty years ago you worried about the computers in the office and the server in the cupboard. Now your team have their own phones, tablets and home setups, they move company data between them, and a good deal of that happens without anyone in the business really keeping track. Staying on top of it is a job in itself.

Then there is the small matter of finding people. Skills are in short supply across IT, and especially in cyber security. Gartner has flagged talent shortages as one of the bigger risks facing organisations today. Even with the budget signed off, filling a technical role can take months, and once you have someone good, keeping them is a challenge of its own, because somebody else is always hiring. When an IT person leaves, everything they knew about your systems walks out of the door with them.

So what do you do if you have no in-house team, or the team you have is already stretched? This is where a managed service provider, usually shortened to MSP, comes in. Working with an MSP means handing some or all of your IT to a team who do this for a living. For most smaller businesses it works out cheaper than hiring, and it takes a lot of day to day worry off the plate.

WORTH KNOWING

Every minute a machine or a connection is down has a cost attached, even if it never appears on an invoice anywhere.



An Overview of Managed IT Services

An MSP is a team of IT specialists looking after technology for a number of businesses. As well as a help desk for your staff, an MSP will usually get involved in setting up infrastructure and networks, advising on what hardware and software to buy, tightening up security, keeping you on the right side of regulations such as GDPR, and training your people.

An MSP is not only there when something breaks. Most of the value comes from the work you never see: patching, monitoring, checking that backups actually ran, and spotting the problems that are quietly building up. That kind of maintenance is a proper job in its own right, and it is the first thing to get squeezed when an in-house team is busy firefighting. It is why plenty of businesses bring in an MSP even when they already have IT staff of their own. The two work well side by side, with the MSP taking on the routine and the in-house team free to work on the things that move the business forward.

What an MSP typically covers

Most MSPs put together a service around what your business actually needs rather than selling one fixed package. It usually includes some mix of the following.

- An on-call IT help desk
- Day to day support for your people
- Backup and recovery
- Network and endpoint security
- Hardware and software setup
- Monitoring to catch faults early
- Network and infrastructure design
- Moving systems to the cloud
- Advice, guidance and training
- Help with compliance and audits

No two providers are quite the same

Some MSPs specialise in one area such as cloud or communications, others cover the lot. Some work with any business, others focus on a sector where regulation shapes most of the decisions. The level of service varies too. Some businesses have no IT people at all and want everything covered. Others have someone internal and simply want a help desk behind them, or a second pair of hands for bigger projects.

Why businesses make the move

- To improve the security of their data and systems
- To cut down on serious IT problems and downtime
- To manage the IT budget more predictably
- To make better use of technology they already pay for
- To move systems and services to the cloud
- To take day to day support off in-house staff
- To support people working from home securely
- To give an existing IT person cover and backup
- To hand over backups, security and compliance
- To get expert advice without hiring for it



CHAPTER ONE

On-Call IT Help



Support is only one part of what an MSP does, but it is the part your team will notice most.

However well your systems are set up and looked after, something will go wrong eventually. When it does, speed matters. People want to get back to what they were doing, not sit waiting for somebody to become free. A help desk gives your team somewhere to go the moment something is not right, and it should be the first place they turn rather than the last.

When that help desk comes from your MSP, your staff get straight through to someone who can help. Plenty of issues are sorted on the call itself, or by an engineer taking remote control of the machine. Anything bigger gets logged, prioritised and picked up properly, on site if that is what it takes. Either way it is quicker than the alternatives. And unlike a vendor help desk, your MSP can see your whole setup, so they can look at the actual cause rather than guessing at it.

The help desk should not be the whole service though. It is the safety net. The number of tickets coming in ought to fall over time as monitoring and maintenance deal with problems before anyone notices them. Ongoing monitoring picks up faults and performance problems early, which is usually the difference between a quick swap and a failed hard drive on a Friday afternoon. It also flags unusual activity on the network, which is often the first sign of a security issue.

Faster answers, less standing around

When people can get help straight away they lose far less of the day. No waiting for the one person who knows how to fix it, and no half an hour lost to having a go themselves and quietly making it worse. It sounds small. Multiply it by everyone in the business over a year and it stops sounding small.

A calmer place to work

Technology that will not behave is genuinely stressful. There is even a term for it. Technostress describes the strain of working with systems you cannot get to do what you need, or the feeling of not quite keeping up with them. It shows up as headaches, low mood, anxiety and general dissatisfaction with work. Over time that means more sick days, higher staff turnover and people who are less engaged than they ought to be.

Support that is easy to reach takes a lot of that away. When help is a phone call or a message away and available to everyone, people ask about the small things instead of struggling on with them for weeks. That is usually where the lost time hides.

If your staff have started working around an IT problem rather than reporting it, that is worth knowing about. It is nearly always a sign that asking for help feels like too much hassle.



Protected outside office hours

Most IT problems can wait until the morning. Security threats cannot, and attacks are deliberately timed for evenings, weekends and bank holidays because that is when nobody is watching.

That is why every 1-Fix support plan includes a **24 x 7 x 365 Security Operations Centre** as standard. A team of analysts monitors your systems around the clock and steps in when something looks wrong, rather than waiting for someone to notice and log a ticket on Monday morning. You are covered overnight and at weekends without paying extra for it.

Out of hours help desk support, where your team can call for anything at all outside normal working hours, is available as an upgrade. Plenty of businesses do not need it. If you have people working late to deadlines, staff in other time zones, or systems that have to keep running overnight, it is worth a conversation.

Support for people who are not in the office

Hybrid working has made in-house support harder. Your IT person can walk over to a desk in the office. They are not going to drive to someone's spare room in Basingstoke to sort out a printer. An MSP help desk supports everyone the same way, wherever they happen to be working that day, which matters when half the team is at home on any given morning.

What else a good help desk gives you

- One place to go for every IT question, instead of a mix of in-house staff, vendor help desks and people quietly searching the internet for answers
- Support processes built on industry best practice rather than whatever has grown up over the years
- Access to a broad knowledge base and a team who have almost certainly seen your problem before
- Something that scales with you as you take on more people
- A quick start, because there is no recruitment round attached to it
- A predictable monthly cost, which makes budgeting a good deal easier

THE SHORT VERSION

Your people get straight through to someone who can see the whole setup, rather than a stranger reading from a script. And the aim is not to log more tickets, it is to need fewer of them.



CHAPTER TWO

IT Education for Employees and Your Organisation



Your MSP can also be a useful source of training and advice, which is often the part businesses forget to ask about.

Keeping up with technology is close to a full time job, and it is the sort of thing that slips when everyone is busy. Even in-house IT teams struggle to find time for it. Rather than sending people on courses or hoping they read up in their own time, you can lean on the people who already do this every day and get the parts that are actually relevant to your business and your industry.

Security awareness training

Not all of it is about new technology. A lot of it is about the basics. Most breaches start with somebody doing something perfectly understandable. Clicking a link that looked fine. Reusing a password. Sending a file to the wrong address. **Over 40 percent of data breaches are put down to human error**, and training moves that number in the right direction. Your MSP can run phishing simulations and short, regular sessions so people learn to spot the signs, without anyone losing half a day to it.

Getting new starters going

Every new job comes with a learning curve, and part of that is software and processes they have never used before. Getting your MSP to handle the IT side of induction, including how to work securely, means new people are productive sooner. It also means they learn the right habits from day one rather than picking up whatever the person next to them does.

Building up the team you already have

Your MSP can work alongside your own IT people too, mentoring and passing on knowledge. With skills hard to come by, growing what you have is often quicker than recruiting. It is cheaper as well, once you count advertising a role, sifting applications, interviewing and onboarding.

Say you want more security capability in-house. Your MSP already has those skills and can pass them on gradually, alongside normal work. That sort of microlearning fits around the day job and costs a fraction of formal training.

Advice on compliance

GDPR, Cyber Essentials, sector specific rules and the security questionnaires clients now send over all take time to get your head around. They also refuse to stay still. An MSP spends a lot of hours on this and can tell you what it means for your business in plain terms rather than sending you a fifty page policy document. That lowers the risk of getting something wrong, and it saves an enormous amount of reading.

It is also useful when a customer asks how you protect their data. Being able to answer that quickly and confidently has won more work than most people expect.



CHAPTER THREE

No More Panicking Over Deleted Files



Human error is the single biggest cause of data loss, behind around a quarter of all incidents.

We have all done it. Saved over the wrong version. Emptied a folder that turned out to matter. Closed something without saving after two hours of work. Even Pixar managed it. Around ninety percent of Toy Story 2 was deleted by accident, and the backup turned out to be incomplete because of a technical fault. The film was recovered in the end, but only after days of painstaking work.

Cloud storage and automated backup have made all of this far less painful than it used to be. They are not a complete answer though. Depending on how your systems are set up, it can still be very easy to remove something permanently, and cloud retention periods are shorter than most people assume. Handing backup and recovery to an MSP means somebody is checking that it works, which is the part almost everyone skips.

Your MSP will make sure data is backed up as often as it needs to be, and just as importantly that it can be restored quickly. For most businesses that means a mix of files syncing to the cloud and full system backups held separately. What you need back varies. Sometimes it is one file, sometimes an application, and occasionally an entire machine from the operating system up.

Having a plan, not just a backup

If you are managing your own backups, that is better than nothing. But what would you do if ransomware went through the network, or the office flooded? How long would it take to get everyone working again, and who decides what comes back first? Recovery is more than restoring files. It might mean sourcing hardware, closing the gap that let it happen and telling customers what is going on while you do it. An MSP will put a recovery plan together with you and then do the work when it is needed, which is not the moment to be reading instructions for the first time.

Keeping the backups safe

Backups need protecting in their own right. Cloud backup adds a useful layer because your data is not sitting in the same building as everything else, so a fire or a burst pipe does not take both at once. There are things to check though, particularly where customer data is involved. Most businesses have obligations around where data is held, how long it is kept and who is able to get at it.

A good provider will make sure your backups are secure, tested and compliant, and that somebody would notice if they quietly stopped running. That last point catches out more businesses than any of the others.

■ A backup nobody has tested is not really a backup. It is an assumption.



CHAPTER FOUR

How Managed Services Help Human Resources



Outsourcing IT takes cost off the payroll, and it takes a fair bit of work off HR at the same time.

There are fewer employees to manage, no recruitment round every time someone leaves, and no scramble to cover holidays or sick leave. If your IT person is away the week the server plays up, that stops being your problem.

With an MSP you get a team rather than one individual, so there is always somebody available with the right skills. You get the benefit of a skilled workforce without managing salaries, benefits, appraisals and everything else that comes with employing people. Certifications, ongoing training and checking that qualifications are what they claim to be are the provider's responsibility rather than yours. And because it usually costs less than a full in-house team, that budget can go into the roles that grow the business instead.

Joiners and leavers

An MSP can also take on the trickier parts of people arriving and moving on. New starters are a security risk if nobody shows them how things work. Getting accounts, devices and training sorted before their first morning means they are up and running quickly and know what is expected of them.

Leavers matter even more. Between remote access, personal devices and the sheer number of cloud apps most businesses now use, there is a lot to close down. Accounts disabled, access revoked, devices returned or wiped, and data kept where you still need it. It is fiddly and easy to miss something, which is exactly why it is worth having a proper process and somebody whose job it is to follow it every time.

IN SHORT

You get a whole team rather than one person, so there is always someone available with the skills you need that day.



IN CLOSING

The Solution Is Simple

So does your business need managed services? Modern businesses need their IT monitored, supported, maintained and moved forward. Somebody has to do that work. The only real question is who.

Building an in-house team is getting harder to justify for all but the largest organisations. Even with the budget in place, there is the time and management that goes into recruiting and running it, and that assumes you can find the right people in the first place.

Managed IT tends to make businesses more efficient and usually costs less than the alternative. IT and the salaries around it are one of the bigger line items for most organisations. Bringing in an MSP, and moving what makes sense into cloud services, lets you budget properly and scale up or down as things change. You pay for what you need, when you need it.

With a fixed monthly fee and a team behind you, planning becomes a great deal easier. Which is why so many businesses have gone this way.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Free IT gap analysis and roadmap

We will review your current setup against where your business needs to be, then give you a written roadmap: what to fix first, what can safely wait, and roughly what each step costs. It takes about an hour of your time.

No charge, no obligation, and no jargon. Even if you decide to stay exactly as you are, you will know where you stand.

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