# eBOOK

# **Considerations when Choosing** a Managed IT Services Provider







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## **Considering Managed IT Services?**

Managing and maintaining your own IT infrastructure and services can be daunting, and most importantly it takes time away from your IT staff that could be spent working on mission-critical projects that will impact your bottom line. Because of the challenges that come with monitoring and managing your own systems, an increasing number of businesses are turning towards managed service providers (MSPs), to either supplement their team or completely outsource their infrastructure management.

Businesses are finding that managed services are...

- Increasing the reliability of their systems
- Improving worker productivity
- Reducing overall costs

However, many MSPs do not offer a turnkey, full service that extends beyond managing network infrastructure and basic software infrastructure.

The decision of which service provider to partner with will shape the future of your business, so it's important to know what to look for, and it's these considerations we address in this eBook.



The managed services market size is estimated to grow from **145.33 Billion in 2016** to **242.45 Billion by 2021**.

Research and Markets, Sept 2016

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# Consideration 1: Depth

A growing infrastructure and evolving technologies place an overwhelming strain on an IT department that may possess limited or specialized knowledge. Collaborating with an MSP is an easy and cost-effective way to add professional skill sets to your team.

An effective managed service provider has a deep bench of personnel with experience in deploying a wide range of delivery models, including traditional IT, managed services and a choice of cloud models: public, private and hybrid.

Even if you're currently using one model right now, that may change in the future as your business needs evolve. You need a partner that can make the transition along side you, without having to vet yet another partner or service.

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### **Consideration 2: Proactive**

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," isn't always the best approach, and certainly the wrong approach for managed IT services.

Managed service providers need to be proactive and constantly working to improve operations to prevent problems such as unplanned network downtime or a data breach. Threshold based predictive analytics are implemented throughout, ensuring the MSP knows before something breaks.

Proactiveness is key in securing your managed assets against threat. An experienced managed services provider is diligent in patching and addressing exploits before they become security compromises.





# **Consideration 3: Knowledge & Processes**

Managing your systems and infrastructure is your managed service provider's primary business, and therefore, they need to be up to date on the latest technology and employ best practices.

When choosing an MSP, you should also consider the knowledge and experience of the company and its team. A reputable MSP will have staff who have earned industry certifications and have established partnerships with major vendors, demonstrating their proven ability to understand and manage various components of technology.

Best practices, such as the ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) framework, aligns business goals with IT requirements, such as utilizing a service catalog, standardized operational procedures, and customer operations handbooks and run books. Ask your managed service provider for a list of their best practices and ensure their processes are validated with a commitment to annual audits.

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### **Consideration 4: Coverage**

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are critical for you to review and understand. An MSP should include provisions such as:

- Guaranteed uptime
- Security
- Power
- Redundancy

The SLA should spell out procedures for backup and disaster recovery, as well as physical and cybersecurity.

In addition to defining the challenges and proposed solutions with response times and metrics, SLAs should include qualifying details for service credit when performance metrics are not met.

Be diligent in your SLA review to make sure that you have a strong contract in place that covers all your critical requirements.



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### **Consideration 5: Flexibility & Versatility**

As your business grows and changes, your managed service provider needs to assure you that they are your true partner and accommodate your changes - with flexibility. Require that your SLA spells out exactly how your managed service provider will address issues such as spikes in traffic, overall growth, migration to other operating models and even downsizing.

As more and more organizations are moving towards a hybrid IT approach, remember that hybrid IT is not total outsourcing. It's maximizing your investments and supplementing with just the right level of third-party support. This means you need a MSP that is diverse and can offer services where you require them.

Providers should be able to offer services in multiple IT environments, regardless of the deployment model. Ask any potential partner about their experience in managing services in a diverse range of environments.

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### **Consideration 6: The Right Tools**

Since MSPs have already invested in the advanced technology and training necessary to build an expert team and systems, by leveraging a shared model, you gain access to the best tools and talent available to manage your IT environment — without having to invest in costly software solutions or stay on top of upgrades.

Advanced managed services require the ability to deploy a proactive service level toolset that monitors all aspects of an environment, including the core internal network infrastructure, virtualized servers, storage and both internal and cloud-based applications and resources. The right tools enable predictive monitoring services that help ensure uptime and higher service levels via proactive and reliable notification of potential issues.

Your MSP should be utilize a service ticketing system that allows you to submit a ticket and automates workflow for triage, prioritization, scheduling and escalation. Ask for a demonstration of their tools and validate they have the right solutions in place to keep you up and running.



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### **Consideration 7: Stability**

Make sure that the provider you select is a well established, stable business that will be around for years to come. Check customer retention numbers and their financial history, as well as growth in a variety of vertical markets.

Although many MSPs offer monthly plans, it is better to approach an MSP relationship as a long-term partnership. Managed services aren't a quick fix situation. It takes time, often months, to develop a mutually-beneficial relationship with an MSP. It's key that a thorough understanding of your business goals, challenges, current environment and expectations is established from the onset. Shy away from providers that promise instant results.

By taking the time necessary to develop a longterm relationship with a well-established provider, you will save money in the long run and benefit from an IT environment that is more scalable, resilient and in alignment with your goals.

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## **Consideration 8: Availability**

Your IT needs aren't limited to 9-5 business hours. One of the major advantages of managed services is being covered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Ask potential providers about their availability, and ensure that they will be monitoring and managing your systems around the clock, year-round.

Make sure that your MSP has designated and provisioned support personnel readily available to help. Ideally your service provider has a Network Operations Center (NOC) who is monitoring your infrastructure health and can work with you immediately, regardless of the time of night. Try calling the number they provide at night and see who answers.

# **AVAILABLE**

Morning, Noon or Night & Anywhere in Between

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### **The OneNeck Difference**

Whether you are looking to outsource all or part of your IT needs, OneNeck IT Solutions is a turnkey, full-service managed service provider with 20+ years of experience. Our certified experts are experienced in deploying services in a variety of IT environments, and our goal is to improve your efficiency so your internal IT staff can focus on your strategic initiatives.

Our US-based managed services portfolio includes:

- Servers
- Applications
- Communication and collaboration
- Database
- Enterprise Applications (ERP)
- Network
- Security
- Storage
- Cloud

Our goal is to offer best in class services using our tools, our technology and our tried-and-true best practices. We're here to give you relief from the mundane so you can focus on the strategic.



The Ultimate Guide to the World's Best MSPs

This list includes the world's top 501 MSPs. OneNeck is #8.



Listed at #81, this list ranks the top revenuegenerating technology integrators, MPSs and IT consultants.



OneNeck appeared on the 2016 Hosting 100 list, which identifies top technology providers positioning managed services to help customers gain a competitive advantage.



This list recognizes solution providers for investing in certifications & employee technical skills. OneNeck earned place on lists in 2015 & 2016.

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