FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT

MARCO'S IT

— SERVICES ANSWERED —

We know IT in and out, so we get lots of questions. Here are answers to the ones that come up the most.

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1.) HOW DO I KNOW IF WHAT I HAVE IN PLACE TODAY IS WORKING WELL FOR ME?

When a customer asks this question, we always respond with this question: "What do you have in place?" If you're wondering if what you have is working for you, make a list of your current IT infrastructure including people, hardware, software and any sources of frustration.

PEOPLE
Do you have dedicated personnel on staff to assist with IT support? Many times we find that the office "go-to" person is another employee who just happens to be good with computers, so everyone goes to them for help.

The companies without a dedicated IT person on staff are utilizing the resources of an employee whose unique ability may not be managing IT tasks. When that person is busy with their regular work, out sick or on vacation, the office enters "scramble mode" as soon as an IT issue pops up. For companies who do have a single dedicated IT person on staff, it is not uncommon for that person to spend most of their time on support related issues for users around the office. These include things like password resets, updating software, troubleshooting, helping with email and removing viruses, among many other tasks.

With this person spending their time on user support, they may be unable to dedicate time to look at the bigger picture of the organization's IT needs. What then happens is that the company can outgrow its current infrastructure. The IT department doesn't notice until it's too late, and changes happen reactively instead of proactively. Since changes are reactive, they tend to be rushed, expensive and not thoroughly thought out. This cycle repeats itself.

HARDWARE
How old are the computers in your office? The average shelf life for a computer is 3-5 years. And that's if you take care of it with regular maintenance.

Do you budget for new computers or are they purchased out of cash flow as they break down? Also, one of the first things we look at when assessing hardware needs is the current backup system. A tape backup, although reliable, has outrun its usefulness for most in the world of business IT. There are much more efficient and secure backup options available.
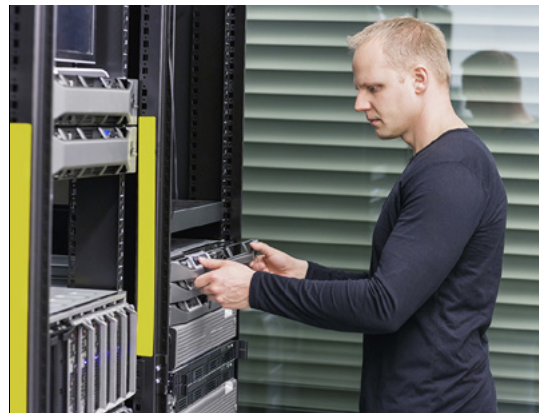
SOFTWARE

Is every staff member using the same version of business-critical software applications? These include:

- Operating Systems (Windows, Mac, etc.)
- Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint)
- Microsoft Outlook
- Other software specific to your industry
- Are all of your security patches up-to-date?

OTHER SOURCES OF FRUSTRATION

The three areas listed above (people, hardware, software) are usually the root cause behind any frustrations that come up around the office. Those frustrations include:

- Lack of support when needed
- Turnaround time on support requests
- Incompatibility between software versions
- Slow or sluggish work stations
- Inadequate backup systems
- Constant issues with viruses, spam and malware

2.) CAN'T MY ON-SITE IT PERSON HANDLE EVERYTHING MY BUSINESS NEEDS?

We get this question all the time. It's a great question and once we uncover the pros and cons of using your on-site IT person, the benefits to utilizing our services quickly come to light. When it comes to on-site IT staff, there are usually two main issues that come up:

1. The IT person is always working with end users on day-to-day support. They don't have time to work on big projects and long-term planning.

2. The IT person is keeping your infrastructure up-to-date and they cannot devote the time needed to support the users on a daily basis.

Most businesses with an on-site IT person fit into one of those two categories. The great thing about Marco's IT Service is that we can supplement either of those scenarios based on what your business needs.

To figure out where we fit best, we start with the current IT staff. What are their specific job duties? Is this that person's core competency? Where are they spending most of their time? What would make their life and job easier and more productive?

When you bring Marco in, we'll take a step back and look at your IT infrastructure from a very high level view and assess any gaps. Are the biggest gaps in user support? Or are they in long term planning and infrastructure development?

Many times we'll find that a business has a very competent IT person on staff. They would love to work with management on long-term planning and infrastructure for the IT growth of the company. However, they're too busy every day supporting users and doing "help desk" style tasks (Issue #1 from before).

When that's the case, Marco can come in and be that "on the front lines" support team so your in-house guru can focus on the big picture. They're then able to call on us as a consultant when needed.

Other times, we'll find that the on-site IT person simply doesn't have the knowledge or experience to take your company to the next level. They're great at day-to-day support and helping out users when needed (Issue #2 from before). This is where we can come in and act as the IT Consultant, or "Virtual CTO," for your management team. We'll keep the infrastructure up-to-date and let your in-house staff manage the users and support.

Or, if your company is lacking both, we can do both too.

3.) WHAT ARE THE SECURITY ISSUES THAT I SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT?

If you have just one or two in-house IT staff members, security issues are one of hundreds of tasks they're faced with on a regular basis. Marco, on the other hand, has several staff members whose sole job is security. All day, every day, they're monitoring, updating, supporting and tweaking our security measures.

With IT data hosted on-site for a business, security measures taken are usually limited to routine setups. We find this all the time when we run an audit of a new customer's IT infrastructure.

One of the biggest misconceptions about outsourced IT and cloud computing has to do with security. Being an IT company, security is of the utmost importance to our business model.

Off-site or cloud-based IT infrastructure is almost always more secure than local installations. We have enterprise level security suites that are usually too expensive for our average customer. Given the economy of scale, we're able to provide the benefits of enterprise level security for small to mid-sized businesses.

When it comes to keeping your data secure, at least two firewalls are involved. One is installed on-site at your business. The other is a virtual firewall in our system that keeps your data separate from other customers' data. The two firewalls talk to each other over a secure connection at all times. The only way data can pass from your system to our data center is through the firewalls.

4.) HOW WILL UTILIZING OUTSOURCED IT AFFECT MY EMPLOYEES?

The biggest frustration we hear from end users (your employees) is the "hit-and-miss" nature of IT support. If your business has limited IT personnel on staff, the support response and solve-times will be all over the board, depending on their work load and schedule. If they go on vacation or are out sick, then the issues multiply rapidly.

Outsourcing the end-user support to Marco can alleviate those headaches. But then a new concern is introduced: a new set of people working with your staff.
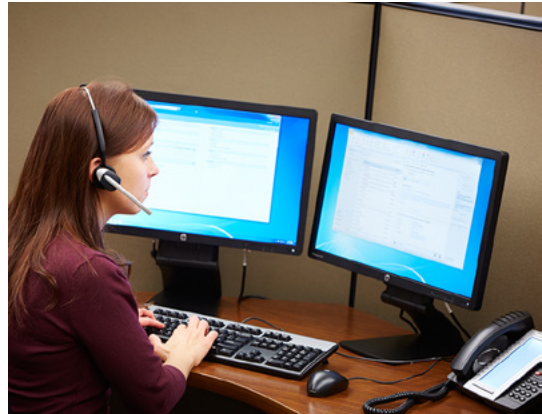
We get it. Employees like to see familiar faces. Having a fellow co-worker in-house to help with their IT issues is comforting. Nobody likes change. One of the biggest concerns we hear from business owners is that their employees will get somebody different every time they call the support desk.

With over 460 certified systems engineers and technical representatives on staff, we've come up with a way to make sure your employees are greeted with the same people on a regular basis. We've simply created support teams. You'll be assigned a team of engineers who will always work on your IT support. Whether they come to your office, or your staff utilizes our remote support, you'll get the same group of people every time.

This approach makes our depth of resources greater than any in-house staff could hope to achieve. Average response times and delays in resolving issues also significantly decrease. There can certainly be a period of "growing pains" that every company must go through when transitioning to outsourced IT support. Our experience and team approach makes that transition a smooth one.

Another question that often comes up is if your employees will still be able to physically talk to someone. Absolutely! That communication is critical to proper IT support. Nothing beats the ability to talk to someone on the phone or face-to-face. Plus, our help-desk staff work locally at a Marco office. You'll never have your call shipped overseas.

These days, the majority of our IT customers choose to utilize our remote support services. This is the direction the industry is evolving and research shows that overall, end users are much more satisfied with the quality and speed of support.

We do offer on-site services as well. Whether you need to, or should, utilize our on-site services is entirely up to you and what works best for your business.

In most cases, our services work really well with in-house IT departments because we can supplement where needed. Your IT folks are happy because they have the needed support to do their jobs better. Your employees are happy because their issues are getting solved quickly and to their satisfaction.

5.) BUSINESS IT NEEDS CHANGE SO FAST, SO WILL THIS DECISION REALLY MAKE SENSE IN THE NEXT 6-18 MONTHS?

Keeping up with the changing IT landscape is what we do best. It's our job to be on top of this stuff. If anything, we'll be ahead of the curve.

It's almost a certainty that your IT needs will change in the coming months and years. We plan for that and we work growth models into our services. If you utilize the benefits of our cloud services, we can scale up or down quickly without your employees noticing a thing.

Our contracts don't lock you into rigid technology restraints. If growth and flexibility is what you want, that's exactly what you'll get.

Our IT services comes with regular Client Business Reviews with your account manager. We'll dig deep into your service offerings to see if any gaps are emerging. We'll look at the frequency and rate of your support desk calls to find any patterns. We'll talk about how your business is growing and plan accordingly. For example, if you have a major acquisition planned for the next quarter, we'll make sure everything is ready to implement your IT infrastructure smoothly and that the help desk is adequately staffed for an increase in call volume.

6.) ISN'T OUTSOURCING MORE EXPENSIVE THAN MANAGING IT IN-HOUSE?

In most cases, we've found that the true costs of an IT department for a business are not fully accounted for. Many companies try to allocate their IT costs based on the salary of one employee plus all costs paid to an official vendor for hardware and software. This approach does a good job of catching the big ticket items like servers and new computers. It's the small expenses that add up quickly, though. These are things like network cables, tape backups, web-ordered software updates and random expenses from employees. We've found in most cases that a large chunk of IT related expenses get swept under the rug. They're inaccurately accounted to other departments because the true nature of the expense isn't understood or well documented.

Then there are indirect expenses like productivity and morale that are impossible to track. When an employee's computer breaks down, they can't do any work until it is fixed. The longer they wait for the IT department to get back to them, the more it costs your business for that person to sit around waiting for IT support.

Breakdowns aside, what if every computer in your company ran twice as fast? Employees would spend less time waiting for programs to load, for emails to send and files to transfer. Those saved seconds turn into saved minutes which turn into saved hours and more. Multiply that by every employee in the company and your productivity just skyrocketed.

Then there are long-term expenses. Many smaller companies don't have a dedicated IT person on staff. They just have a single employee who is the unofficial "IT captain." It isn't their job, but it's part of what they do. IT support takes away from their core focus. As the IT needs ebb and flow, so does their productivity in their primary role.

Another simple but overlooked expense is training due to lack of documentation. When a new IT captain takes over, or tries to fill in, they must relearn processes and dig through archives of unorganized documents to figure out where to even start.

Overall, what we've found in our years of experience is that outsourcing is less expensive. Not always, but most of the time. We supplement where we're needed. In most cases, outsourcing a percentage of IT services ends up saving your company money.

We can add time back into your employees' days. We can make your users more productive and equip your IT staff to be more efficient. We'll make sure that all IT related costs are properly covered and accounted for.

To learn more about our IT services, start by requesting a consultation with one of our IT specialists.

Connect with us to learn more about Marco, our services and how we do business.