



The Extended IT Services Provider Checklist

Make a Hard Decision Easier

A BETTER WAY TO WEIGH YOUR CHOICES

Choosing a new IT Services provider—or even deciding to renew with one—can seem overwhelming. Everyone says they’re “different,” and some throw around complicated technical jargon to seem superior. They don’t all use the same terms for what they do, and that makes it incredibly difficult to compare apples to apples.

So we’ve compiled a list of 24 easy-to-understand business technology questions you can ask any current or prospective provider. Find out what they really mean when they say they handle certain issues.

Then, once you have comparable checklists in front of you, consider the following 3 factors:

Will I have to become an IT expert to understand or check behind them?

How do my employees feel about working with them, i.e., do they delay reporting issues because of unhelpful or unfriendly responses?

Do these people understand my business?

An IT Services Provider should be a strategic partner, helping to bring your business to the next level. You wouldn’t settle for less for your customers, so why settle for less for yourself?



THE EXTENDED IT SERVICES PROVIDER CHECKLIST

Cut through the confusion to find the best strategic partner for your business.

YES NO

- Do they answer their phones live?
- Do they have a Service Level Agreement for tickets you submit? And meet it?
- Is their help desk US-based, not outsourced overseas?
- Do they include weekend and after-hours emergency support--it's not extra?
- Do they provide detailed invoices explaining what you're paying for?
- Do they have adequate errors and omissions, business liability, and workers' comp insurance?
- Do they take the time to explain things in plain English? No superior or patronizing "geek speak"?
- Do their technicians arrive on time? And do they schedule when it's convenient for you, not just them?
- Do they insist on monitoring your network 24/7/365 to PREVENT problems from turning into downtime?
- Do they provide backups, patches, and updates so you know for sure that your systems are secure, compliant, and protected?
- Do they monitor both on-site AND off-site backups?
- Do they verify your backups so you know what is backed up and that they work?
- Will they help you develop a disaster recovery plan for getting your network restored quickly in the event of a disaster and work with your staff to test it?
- Do their technicians maintain certifications and participate in ongoing training?
- Do they have multiple technicians on staff who are familiar with your network, not just a 'one-man band' who could go sick or missing when you really need them?
- Do they use documentation and workflows to stay organized and save you time during troubleshooting?
- Do they provide comprehensive cybersecurity protection for your network?
- Will they provide cybersecurity training to your employees?
- Do they explain WHY they do things like manage admin access and institute security policies to keep your network safer?
- Will they help you create and enforce an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for your staff?
- Will they relieve you of time-consuming vendor management and deal with your ISP, phone company, and line-of-business applications, or are you on your own?
- Do they support your in-person business events and/or online efforts?
- Do they bring ideas or improvements to you, rather than waiting until you ask?
- Do they meet with you regularly to talk strategy and planning?

If you answered "NO" to any of these items or couldn't fill in a response, contact your prospective IT services provider(s). As a partner working for the success of your business, your IT professionals should be able to give clear answers and set your mind at ease so you can focus on achieving your business goals.