



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 23 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 written, guaranteed response time for tickets you submit?	_____	_____
• Is their help desk US-based, not outsourced overseas?	_____	_____
• Do they include weekend and after-hours emergency support, or is that 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 to protect YOU?	_____	_____
• 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 or for 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 insist on monitoring on-site AND off-site backups?	_____	_____
• Do they insist on doing periodic test restores of your backups?	_____	_____
• Will they provide a disaster recovery plan for getting your network restored quickly in the event of a disaster as part of their service, or is that extra?	_____	_____
• Do their technicians maintain certifications and participate in ongoing training?	_____	_____
• Do they have multiple technicians on staff who are familiar with your network, or are they a 'one-man band' who could go sick or missing when you really need them?	_____	_____
• Do they provide a comprehensive cybersecurity protection plan?	_____	_____
• 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 create and help you enforce and 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, or do they wait 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.