HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY PARTNER

Managed IT Services firms can provide greater network uptime, more predictable budgeting, and better align your technology with your business goals.

Here's how to find a partner that can deliver on those promises.

COMPLETE NETWORK
STRATEGY SUPPORT SECURITY

Information technology has become more important than ever, making it critical you have a high-quality partner to guide and protect your network.

Technology now plays a more decisive role in the growth and success of businesses than ever before. From increasing productivity and collaboration with cloud computing, to driving stronger customer and employee engagement with mobile devices, there are many excellent reasons why companies are making their technology a priority.

To maximize the impact of your IT, it must be expertly deployed, maintained and protected. Without a comprehensive, systematic approach to the management of your network technology, you're leaving yourself vulnerable to a range of negative outcomes, like reduced employee efficiency and morale, data loss, costly network downtime, or cybersecurity disaster.

THE MANY CHALLENGES OF ACHIEVING RELIABLE IT
Hiring internal IT staff seems like the most obvious method of achieving strong, dependable IT. The reality is quite different. The IT job market is highly competitive, which can make finding and hiring a qualified IT engineer a long, expensive, and frustrating process.

Adding to this complexity is that a single employee rarely has the breadth of skill (or time) to provide great support, protect your network from threats, while also providing the strategic guidance your business needs to flourish. That means you must choose between hiring staff for each of those tasks or make compromises about service quality, neither of which are attractive options.

The complexity and cost of staffing an internal IT team is a major reason why most small and midsized businesses look to outsource their technology support.

*The top three reasons businesses outsource:*
1) Increase Efficiency
2) Increase Available Expertise
3) Increase Flexibility

MANAGED IT SERVICES —
THE NEW ERA OF PROACTIVE TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT
While in the past businesses looked to "break-fix" providers or high-priced consultants for help maintaining and guiding their IT, those models have been largely replaced by the managed IT service model.
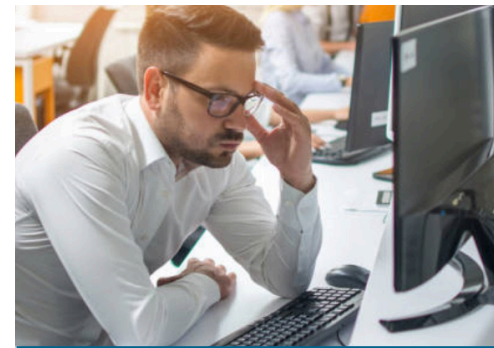
Employee error is the number one cause of network downtime, followed closely by cyberattack.

2017
53%

2018
61%
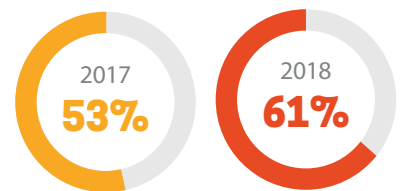
According to the Verizon Data Breach Investigation Report, 61% of all cybersecurity breaches targeted small businesses last year, up from 53% during the previous year.

COMPLETE NETWORK

STRATEGY SUPPORT SECURITY

A managed IT service provider or "MSP" uses a set of specialized tools to proactively monitor, update, and maintain a company's network infrastructure for a single, flat monthly fee. The stability, confidence, and simplified budgeting that an MSP provides is an ideal foundation for digital transformation and the current standard for accessing high-quality IT expertise.

Here are the key business benefits to working with an MSP:

■ **Maximized Network Uptime**
Leading MSPs will provide 24/7 supervision of your network systems. Proactive technology support prevents IT downtime by identifying problem areas early, remediating issues before they grow into productivity killers, and responding immediately to problems that crop up suddenly.

■ **Increased Productivity and Collaboration**
A quality technology services partner will be familiar with the latest productivity software and technology, such as cloud computing, mobile devices, and others. This can help you optimize business processes, streamline collaboration, and better engage employees.

■ **Streamlined Budgeting**
The managed IT services model gives clients a single, flat-rate bill for the management and support of their entire network – no matter how much onsite or off-site support is required. This incentivizes the service provider to maintain optimal network uptime and gives the client a predictable means of budgeting for their IT.

■ **Better Business and Technology Alignment**
Leading MSPs like Complete Network will include consulting services as part of their flat-rate solution. This service, called a virtual chief information officer (vCIO), helps clients unlock hidden potential from their IT by properly aligning their business goals and technology.

40-60%
FAIL
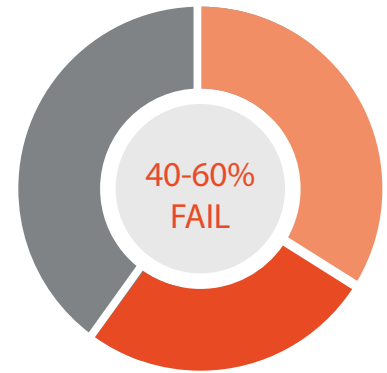
60% of small and midsized businesses that are hacked go out of business within 6 months, according to the National Cybersecurity Alliance.

There has been explosive growth in the number of managed IT service providers over the last decade. With many of them making similar claims, what is the best way to identify the right provider for your business?

A QUALITY MSP PROVIDES YOU WITH A TEAM OF EXPERTS

Technology has grown so complex that it takes a team of skilled professionals to effectively maintain a reliable network. When selecting an MSP, make sure you choose one that has the right team and capabilities to help you thrive as you grow.

- **An IT Help Desk Staffed by Skilled Technicians**
  A major feature of an MSP's offering is its outsourced IT help desk. The IT help desk team exists on the very front line of your technology challenges. They're the first responders to a computer or application that stops working, and the teammate that will help ferry your employees through their IT struggles.

  Because of the time sensitive nature of virtually all technology support issues, it's important that your help desk team has the technical skills to understand and rapidly address the vast range of problems that could arise. This technical competency should include certification by leading organizations like **CompTIA, Microsoft, Cisco, and others.**

  In addition to the right technical knowledge, a strong help desk team will also be approachable and friendly. The help desk team will be in consistent contact with your staff over the coming years, if they don't offer an enjoyable help desk experience, then service quality and your technology will both eventually suffer.

- **Accomplished Senior Engineers**
  Another benefit of partnering with an MSP is having direct access to skilled IT engineers who can help you better integrate key systems and solve complex or chronic technology problems. These engineers should be central to your work with an MSP from the earliest analysis and on-boarding stages.

  While evaluating the skills of a senior engineering team can be difficult, a good place to begin is by simply asking the team about its experience. Do they have strong client testimonials and a track record of success in your industry? Can they point to success stories helping companies in your industry solve similar problems as the ones you're experiencing? Strong answers to these questions are a good indicator that their engineering team is up to the challenge.

Having the right people is *also about having enough of the right people*. Small or new MSPs built around just one or two individuals lack the manpower to simultaneously serve the needs of all their clients. Being understaffed is another way to guarantee shoddy service and unchecked technology issues.

THEY UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT YOUR CULTURE
Your MSP is going to be a crucial long-term partner that will have a deep involvement in your technology and business. It's important to partner with a company that understands the gravity of this commitment and has a culture that supports the client-provider relationship with transparency, accountability, and professionalism.

The Importance of Being a Team Player
Outsourcing your IT services means handing a mission-critical skill over to a third party. This makes it very important that you trust the provider fully and that they take their role as a trusted advisor with great seriousness.

These onsite meetings are an important opportunity for your IT partner to ask questions and provide you with advice to new business problems, deepening their role in the long-term growth and success of your company.

Ways That a Value-Oriented MSP Can Help Foster Long-Term Partnerships
- Proactively bring budgetary needs to your team
- Recommend initiatives to improve business efficiency
- Bring clarity to new issues related to technology

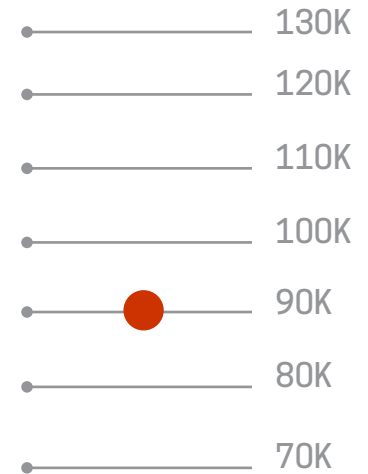### The Ability to Build Strong Internal Relationships
While MSPs are an outsourced solution, working with an MSP doesn't mean sacrificing the feeling of camaraderie and teamwork associated with an internal IT staff. The top MSPs know how to build that feeling of unity with only periodic visits to your physical office location, which includes:

- Always being accurate and timely with communication
- Providing coachable staff who prioritize adapting to your culture
- Demonstrating integrity and transparency with both their clients and staff

The MSP relationship benefits from client engagement as well. When Complete Network clients keep us up to date about the latest developments at their company, we're able to provide advice that keeps their systems supported and efficient, helping them derive maximum value from our partnership.

DOCUMENTED PROCESSES FOR IT SUPPORT
Well-supported technology requires having documented processes for managing any issue that may arise. Without documented solutions, your technology partner will waste time as they reinvent the wheel for even straightforward IT issues. This inevitably leads to uneven or inconsistent support and wasted productivity.

According to jobsite Indeed, the nationwide average for a mid-career network engineer is $90,000 a year.

130K
120K
110K
100K
90K
80K
70K

To help you choose the right MSP, you should inquire about their support processes from the early meetings. Not only will a good MSP want to talk about those things, they *should be enthusiastic about doing so*. Here are some things that you can ask them about:

- **A Clear Organizational Structure**
  Possessing a strong team of generalists is the foundation for any good MSP, but mature MSPs will also have specialist workgroups or divisions for cloud computing, cybersecurity, and compliance. Those teams should be supported by dedicated management staff who's only responsibility is timely service delivery and client satisfaction.

- **Good Communication and Change Control Processes**
  Your network is in constant flux. Your IT support solution will need modifications as those systems change and develop. Your MSP should offer a clear set of processes to account for changes in organizational structure and goals, including a clear line of communication decision makers.

- **The Ability to Set Boundaries**
  Some businesses only need to outsource select services to an MSP. Those companies will want a partner that can contain its efforts to only the network services being outsourced *without interfering with other areas of the network*. This requires having well-defined outsourcing processes and experience managing the complexity of these arrangements .

- **Vendor Management and Support**
  Without strong vendor management processes, your business may over-spend procuring IT services, or open yourself to unanticipated security vulnerabilities. Vendor management processes like evaluating suppliers, performing performance evaluations, and cybersecurity risk analysis are all important ways of controlling costs and protecting your business.

BEST-IN-CLASS TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY

MSPs like Complete Network should bring more than just expertise and manpower to the table, they should also provide a set of the best tools and technologies to streamline network support and help maximize the security of your technology. The heart of your MSPs technology should be a top-notch Remote Monitoring and Alerting system. This platform allows the MSP to gather insight about your network, keep your systems up to date, remotely administer patches and install updates in an organized way, and automate maintenance tasks.

In addition to the core MSP toolkit, a qualified MSP should also provide:

- **Best of Breed Security Tools**
  With cyberattacks on the rise, it's more important than ever before that you have access to the latest security resources to keep your business

safe. A top-notch MSP will have their finger on the pulse of the changing security landscape and have tools on hand to help mitigate that risk for their clients, such as intrusion detection systems, anti-virus software, VPN solutions, and more.

For leading MSPs like Complete Network these tools are a point of great effort and pride. Ask us about **Complete Network's enterprise-grade incident management tools**, we'd love to tell you about them.

▪ Disaster Recovery Solution
No amount of cybersecurity or network support vigilance can ensure 100% protection of all your company data, which is why having and testing a solid disaster recovery plan is so important. Top MSPs all come armed with the latest backup and disaster recovery tools to protect your most critical data and ensure that if disaster ever strikes, they can restore services at your company quickly and reliably.

▪ Reporting to Accurately Gauge Support Quality
MSPs measure the effectiveness of their support using key performance indicators (KPIs) on client satisfaction, staff efficiency, help desk tickets, and much more. Having this historical data laid out in reports will enable your MSP to achieve higher degrees of accountability and further improve the quality of their service to your business.

Most software in the MSP toolbox has limited functionality right out of the box. It takes years of customization, integration, and know-how to configure these tools for maximum impact, another way in which an experienced MSP like Complete Network offers value above and beyond a less-experienced one.

COMPLETE NETWORK IS BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESSES WITH TRUSTED MANAGED IT SERVICES

For over 20 years, Complete Network has been providing world-class managed IT services to a wide variety of organizations in the legal and financial services fields, healthcare, manufacturing, government, and more.

Driven by a passion for network strategy, support, and security excellence, the Complete Network team prides itself on being able to provide everything a business needs in order to realize its highest levels of IT confidence and efficiency.

If you're a business in New York's Capital Region or the greater Charlotte, North Carolina area who wants a world-class IT partner to help you take control of your technology, we encourage you to reach out to our team with your questions.

Contact us any time at:
contact@complete.network
or *877.877.1840*