



Finding Your IT Zen: Choosing the Perfect Outsourced IT Partner



8 Mindful Evaluation: Questions to Ask Your Potential MSP

Some MSPs' business models are streamlined, easy to use, and provide users tremendous value, while others seem to cause more problems than they resolve. So, it's important to understand your IT and business goals and ask potential MSPs the right questions to make sure your goals align.

What kind of availability do you offer?

When determining what kind of availability your organization needs, think about your office locations (e.g., multiple time zones), working hours, and the cost of potential downtime. If your MSP doesn't staff a 24x7 help desk, issues may only be resolved during their business hours.

Are you backed by credentials that demonstrate your capabilities?

There are third parties that audit MSPs to validate their service offerings, and they look deeply into policies and procedures, security, data integrity, confidentiality, and financial stability. Your MSP should provide details regarding their certifications.

Do you integrate with in-house resources?

If you are only outsourcing part of your IT needs, you'll want to make sure that the MSP you partner with can easily work with your internal IT staff and environment and that there is adequate knowledge transfer and reporting.

What are your on-site and remote capabilities?

Finding an MSP that can serve all your office locations, remote employees, and data centers is crucial. Find an MSP that has the capability to manage all your IT needs and the ability to scale with your organization as it grows.

What are your resolution metrics and service level agreements?

What is the average time to ticket resolution? What does the escalation process look like? User downtime costs your organization money, so determining a realistic and ideal service level agreement (SLA) can help you pick a provider that has the right processes in place to meet your business needs.

Do you offer domestic services and is your help desk located in the US?

Many MSPs are not entirely domestic – many outsource a portion of their services offshore to lower costs. Selecting a U.S.-based provider avoids the potential for language barriers that could lead to longer resolution times.

What kind of services do you offer?

MSPs vary in both size and service offerings. Selecting a smaller, local company can be a good idea if quick onsite support is important and your organization's IT needs are simple. If you're looking for an MSP that can serve all your needs, you might need to look for a larger company. We recommend finding a company with years' of experience and a solid track record of success. You want a company that is large enough to possess the individual departments that specialize in different technologies and services (e.g., security, automation, cloud, project delivery) and has a vast network of partners across the country, but is still small enough to give your organization the personalized attention it deserves.

Integrating Harmonious IT: What Happens Next?

Prior to developing a harmonious IT solution, your MSP will want to understand the current state of your organization's IT. That insight comes from a combination of investigative questions, including: what does your infrastructure look like? How many endpoints do you have in your network? Sometimes, the MSP will run non-intrusive software in your environment that collects data and performs a high-level risk assessment of systems, servers, networking infrastructure, endpoint security, and databases to help develop a greater understanding of your systems.

The final report can be used as a mutual document that helps the MSP determine which services are ideal for creating a harmonious IT environment for your specific needs. By harmonious IT, we mean an IT system that functions smoothly, securely, and efficiently, promoting collaboration and communication within the organization.



Types of Business Support for Harmonious IT

Outsourced business-grade IT support can be characterized primarily in two ways: proactive and reactive. Both models are essential in achieving harmonious IT.

The reactive model is intuitive – you wait for something to break before it gets fixed – and has been around since the beginning of the managed technology era. Since you only pay when you call tech support, it seems like the most affordable option. This option is fantastic if your organization's IT runs smoothly. However, if an issue arises, it can be very expensive to fix, not to mention the cost of lost productivity and downtime. Reactive support is crucial for harmonious IT as it helps address immediate issues and maintain overall system stability.

Conversely, proactive support is designed to stop problems before they occur and is equally important in achieving harmonious IT. MSPs deliver regular maintenance on your network, ensure hardware is under warranty, and optimize applications for maximum efficiency. Proactive support works hand-in-hand with reactive support to create a seamless IT environment that minimizes downtime and maximizes productivity.

Think about the two differing models this way:

Car owners have the option to bring their car in every 5,000 miles to get the oil and filter changed and perform a scheduled service or push the car to its limits and hope for the best. The first option is proactive and prevents engine issues down the road, while the latter is reactive and relies heavily on “break/fix.” While more affordable in the short term, the “break/fix” model is risky and could ultimately render the entire car useless. In the context of harmonious IT, both proactive and reactive support work together to ensure your organization's IT systems are reliable and efficient, contributing to a harmonious working environment.

Harmonious IT focuses on creating a seamless and efficient IT environment, achieved through the perfect balance of proactive and reactive support. Small businesses with simple technology needs, such as a plumbing company, can benefit from reactive support as it allows them to pay for IT services only when needed. However, for technology-savvy organizations, proactive support offered by Managed Service Providers (MSPs) is a more fitting solution, providing regular monitoring, software updates, and helpdesk support to avoid potential problems and reduce costs.

Harmonious IT considers both approaches, aiming to establish an environment that runs at optimal speeds with minimal service outages and cyber threats. MSPs offering all-inclusive plans ensure that organizations have a stable environment with well-defined uptime SLAs, incentivizing MSPs to perform regular maintenance for maximum business uptime.

A good MSP understands your business practices and helps develop solutions that align with them, guiding your business through the ever-changing technological landscape. In essence, harmonious IT is about finding the right balance between proactive and reactive support, tailored to your organization's specific needs, for a stable and efficient IT environment.



Deciding in Harmony: Making an Informed IT Support Choice

1

Know your company's IT needs, budget, expectations and future goals so you can determine what service model is best for your company: in-house or outsourced.

2

Know what questions to ask a potential MSP and what characteristics/capabilities you require.

3

Understand the differences among the service plans the MSP provides, and choose one that provides the best value based on your business goals.

Outsourcing to an MSP ensures that your IT infrastructure allows your employees to be as efficient as possible, your clients to have a good experience, and your stakeholders to see the value in their IT investments. Whether you have a pre-existing team and are only looking for after-hours support or your only IT engineer just submitted their resignation, an MSP can take the reins to allow you to focus on your primary business objectives. Choosing the right IT partner can feel daunting, but by using the information we provided throughout this document, we hope you can come to a clear conclusion as to the right solution for your organization.

