



THE KEY TO HARMONIOUS IT: CHOOSING THE RIGHT IT SUPPORT STRATEGY



Balancing In-House and Outsourced IT Support: A Path to Harmony



42%

of IT professionals leave their job within two years.

Recruiting and hiring these same IT professionals cost an organization

10%

of that position's annual salary.



Pros

Convenience:

In-house engineers are available when you need them, which is extremely convenient. They work closely with employees across the entire company and can provide quick and personalized support.

Response time:

Having a team in-house can guarantee a quick response time to physical problems (e.g., jammed printer, faulty monitor, cabling).

Intimate knowledge:

In-house engineers only work on your environment, so they have an in-depth understanding of your infrastructure and know how to resolve common issues quickly.

Cons

Luxury:

Having a reliable and experienced IT professional onsite can be expensive to maintain. Costs to consider include:

- Recruitment fees to find the right skillsets
- Salary and benefits
- Ongoing training (e.g., exams and certifications)
- Capital expenses to provide them the necessary equipment and tools

Working time:

IT is a 24x7 responsibility. Having staff work after hours, weekends, holidays can cause burnouts and a work/life imbalance for employees. And, what happens when they get sick or go on vacation?

Limited knowledge:

Even after certifications and classes, one engineer will not know everything there is to know about technology; in-house technical staff often lack the expertise that comes with having access to a deep pool of experts and maintaining a bench of specialized experts in-house can be costly and inefficient.

Exploring the Yin and Yang of Outsourced IT Support vs In-house Support

When deciding to outsource IT support, you will have to engage with an MSP. These are companies that specialize in taking care of all or parts of other companies' IT support. MSPs can range from small om-and-pop shops to large corporations with hundreds or thousands of employees.

At first, IT support needs were basic, but as technology evolved, so did support requirements. MSPs came about to offer companies a way to outsource their technology needs by providing them "break/fix" support, meaning support was entirely reactive. Although it was a start, this method often resulted in significant downtime and productivity loss, as well as negative user and customer experiences.

Supplemental technologies soon started appearing that allowed for more proactive IT management, and thus, MSPs were able to provide more proactive services (e.g., monitoring, scripting, patch management), which allowed companies to be more productive because their IT was more reliable.

Today, mature MSPs offer truly outsourced IT solutions customized for individual company needs. A virtual CIO (vCIO) will look for inefficiencies in your organization's systems and create a roadmap for digital transformation. A Security Operations Center (SOC) team will monitor your network 24x7 from malicious attackers. An automation team will push updates and complete patching on all employee computers overnight so that productivity is not lost during the workday. A help desk center will have engineers waiting to take your call at any time, so that sales proposal gets finished before the midnight deadline. Maintaining the infrastructure is a lot of work, but a Managed Service Provider can shoulder much of the responsibility while you internal IT teams focus on driving your organization forward. Here are some things to consider if you choose to outsource some or all of your IT needs:

Pros

Cost-effective: Generally, outsourcing is cheaper than maintaining a staff in-house. Employee expenses are spread across the MSPs client-base and MSPs have access to industry leading tools and technologies that are expensive to purchase and difficult to maintain in-house.

Availability: Many MSPs provide 24x7 IT support, so you don't have to wait until the next business day to get the help you need. They also provide defined Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to demonstrate and define key support metrics.

Expertise: MSPs provide customers access to a deep pool of experts with a range of industry experience, and often have multiple years' experience supporting many technologies in a variety of industries. A solid MSP will have a variety of solutions to support, secure, and optimize your infrastructure, users, and everything in-between.

Cons

Offshore: Many large providers outsource some of their operations offshore. If domestic support is important to your organization, ask potential providers if their business functions are delivered domestically.

Personability: Although they may provide great customer service, IT providers typically don't have a constant physical presence in your office, which naturally may cause a different dynamic in the partnership.

Indirect Control: The point of outsourcing is to let the provider worry about your IT, but some organizations have difficulty abdicating that responsibility.

Finding IT Balance: Determining What to Outsource

If you are looking at keeping certain IT functions in-house and outsourcing others, determining when to outsource, what to outsource, and how to outsource is key. Non-strategic outsourcing can lead to inefficient use of IT budget, misalignment with company growth goals, and organizational friction.

When determining what to outsource, when, and how, we recommend asking the following questions:

- What is the business growth strategy?
 - How quickly is the business looking to scale up?
 - Are there acquisitions to account for that need to be integrated into your environment?
 - What does your outsourcing strategy look like today and where does that fit into your organization's 5-year growth plan?
- What are the gaps in your current IT environment?
 - Break out your IT into logical areas of your infrastructure
 - Understand what the true cost for each of these areas are for handling in-house – employee resources, tools, worker's compensation, real estate, insurance, etc.
 - Identify your gaps between what you currently have for those areas and what you need
- Are there strategic initiatives upcoming that will require specialized experience or will take time away from your internal IT staff?
- Are there any risks involved with outsourcing certain functions?
- Do you need to multi-source any of these functions?
 - If so, do you have to have the overhead to manage those resources?



Additional Benefits of Outsourcing It

If you are looking at keeping certain IT functions in-house and outsourcing If you're still not convinced, many MSPs are a "one-stop-shop" for your IT needs. They offer an array of services – not just IT management – to cover all IT needs, including project management, telephony, and security. Here is additional information regarding the value of outsourcing to a Managed Service Provider.

If you decide your organization would benefit from proactive IT services, MSPs offer a wide array of services. Every organization's needs are different, but we suggest that your plan includes at least some level of support of the following four areas:

- Cybersecurity
- End-User Support
- Infrastructure Management
- Strategic Consulting and Cloud Services

If you have decided that in-house IT support is the best approach for your company, great! We are happy that our guide helped you come to that conclusion, and we wish you all the best in your business endeavors. However, if you think that outsourcing some or all of your organization's IT support is the best approach, continue reading to discover more advice that will help you choose the right long-term MSP.

