

7 Smart Strategies to Save Money with Managed I.T. Services

- Your company can now enjoy the technology advantages of major corporations
 - Putting economical technology services to work for you saves money and grows profits
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Managed IT Services are one important way to accomplish what is probably foremost on every business owner or CEO's mind; saving money.

Let's level the playing field. Your business can have all the computing and communicating power of major corporations with huge Information Technology (IT) departments and use it to dramatically reduce your operating costs, increase your revenues and grow your bottom line profits. You've likely heard about or read about "Managed Services" and may be wondering what that means to you.

Managed IT Services are one important way to accomplish what is foremost on every business owner or CEO's mind; **saving money**. Reducing capital expense as well as operating expense. Giving their people new ways to be more productive to generate more revenue at lower cost.

Here are seven key strategies you can use immediately to do that, and do it without hiring any more people, without buying any more equipment, and without it costing you an arm and a leg.

STRATEGY #1 Let Somebody Else Worry About IT – Your Quality “Managed Services” Provider

Today, in most cities, you can find a quality managed services provider in your own business district, and they'll usually be a business like yours with a personal understanding of what your business needs to operate and grow. Here are a few key characteristics to look for when checking out possible service providers:

Are They Within Walking Distance?

Computer firms like to talk about "SLA"s or "Service Level Agreements" which is a fancy way of saying "how quickly we can get things fixed for you." It's very easy for them to dazzle you with statistics, but the real issue is "how far away from me is your office?" Ask that question. If it's more than a few miles their "SLA" may be meaningless. Domino's Pizza won't deliver to you unless you're within a certain radius from their store. Your computer service provider should at least be able to match that, and without charging you additional "travel charges."

It's your business and your business network, and the best managed services providers will want to meet with you regularly to keep you informed about the status or "health" of your network and make good suggestions to help you keep it in top condition.

Do They Do Proactive Monitoring of Your Network?

A true managed services provider can connect securely to your company's network over the internet and keep a close eye on everything. If one of your servers is using too much disk space or memory or the processors are getting overloaded they can know about it and be able to do something about it long before it affects you or your staff. And usually they have their engineers checking your network reports to make sure you're getting the best performance from your computers. If they don't have this service they're going to depend upon you calling them when something breaks.

Is Your Valuable Business Data Properly Backed Up Each Day?

Comprehensive monitoring services should certainly include making sure that your daily server backups worked properly. Also, since they are watching your internet lines they should also be able to manage those services for you, placing and tracking calls to your internet provider should a problem develop. That's a headache you'd prefer to have someone else handle, and with their experience doing it they should be much better prepared than you to get the provider to move quickly to resolve your problems.

Regular Reporting and Advice

It's your business and your business network, and the best managed services providers will want to meet with you regularly to keep you informed about the status or "health" of your network and make good suggestions to help you keep it in top condition.

Can They Fix Your Problems From Their Office?

Watch out for the provider who does have proactive monitoring but insists on sending someone to your office every time to fix things, because they may be looking to overcharge you for "field service." Top providers have an extensive set of remote access tools they can use to reach into your network to solve most problems in minutes rather than keeping you waiting for hours.

Can They Be Your Network Administrator?

Big companies have network administrators who take care of all the daily network housekeeping. Need to add users? Need to delete someone you just fired? No problem. But your small company probably doesn't have anyone to make sure those important things happen quickly. Enter your computer services provider. With their remote tools they can become your network administrator. Make a quick call or send a quick email to them and they'll make sure the necessary changes get made.

While they're at it they can also keep a careful eye to make sure that all of your computers are fully up to date with all upgrades, updates, patches, virus signatures, and everything else that helps your network give you maximum value. The best providers will also perform installations, adds, moves & changes, referred to as IMAC services, at no additional charge.

Hot Spares

Sometimes computing equipment breaks. That's an unavoidable fact, and when something breaks there's no way to reach it with remote access tools. The best service providers make "hot spares" available to you, meaning they'll keep equipment similar to yours in stock at their office. In case yours breaks they can rush out theirs to replace it, saving you days of what would otherwise be lost working time. Most charge an extra fee for this service but it pays for itself the first time your equipment breaks but your people keep working.

Do They Service What You Use?

Of course one of the most fundamental questions you need to ask is whether or not they can service and support the hardware and software you use. Do you use Macs in your business? Windows PCs? Be sure your provider is fully familiar with them and can offer you not only the best service and support, but also the best possible advice on what more you can do with what you have, and what else you should have to help you gain more value from your computer network.



Today you can obtain all the computer services you need by simply plugging your computer into the wall like you would your fax machine.



Get IT Out of Your Office!

Capital investments. Now there's a phrase nobody wants to hear. The pricetag for big computer investments like servers can be enormous. Who has the cash to lay out? And then if it breaks and you don't have the maintenance contract there's more money thrown to the wind. Who can afford it?

So don't spend it! Today you can have all the computing power you need without owning or having to maintain a single server. In fact you can make computing a budgeted, controllable monthly expense!

You're Already Using This Strategy

If your small company uses electricity, or telephone service, or uses running water or has a burglar alarm, then you're already using the right strategy to get big technology services working for your small company. How?

To use electricity you simply plug whatever it is you're using into the wall, but the power generating plant isn't in your office, is it? Same with the telephone. To get running water you go to the faucet and turn on the tap, but the reservoir isn't sitting in a closet somewhere in your back room. Even your burglar alarm may have sensors all over the place, but when someone tries to break in it connects to a monitoring station miles away where a team of experts stand ready to send the police.

Do the same with technology.

It used to be that if you wanted your staff to share files or printers you had to get a network server to make that happen. You want email? That's another server. Not anymore. Today you can obtain all the computer services you need by simply plugging your computer into the wall like you would your fax machine.

STRATEGIES 2 thru 7: Plug-In Computing

You've probably read or seen news articles about "the cloud" or "cloud computing." Some call it "managed services" or "hosted services" and others "utility computing." But at the end of the day it's simple. You plug in your computer and you get everything else from somewhere else. You don't own or pay for any big servers. And the selection of services is growing! Here are some examples:



STRATEGY #2:

E-Mail

We're not talking about just plain-jane email. Sure you can get that remotely and if you have internet access at home you probably obtain your email service from your carrier already. For your business you can have all the advantages major corporations do. Shared calendars so you can schedule meetings without having to track each other down to see if you're available. Shared contacts so everyone has access to the company rolodex. Email archiving and backup so you can meet the many new regulatory requirements the government keeps imposing.

STRATEGY #3:

iPhone, Blackberry & Other Handheld Devices

Add to your plug-in email the ability to take your info on the road with a handheld device like an iPhone, a Blackberry, a Palm Treo, or other Windows Mobile Devices.

STRATEGY #4:

Anti-Spam & Anti-Virus

How much time do your people spend each day cleaning spam out of their inbox? It doesn't take long before you're burning thousands of dollars in lost productivity. You can install your own anti-spam and anti-virus devices, but then you have to maintain them and you know they'll almost always be out of date. Remote anti-spam and anti-virus services stop the bad email before it ever gets near your network, and they keep everything updated at all times so you don't have to. Statistics say that close to three-quarters of all email traffic is spam. Can you imagine how much more efficient your email would be if you removed three-quarters of the traffic from it? Well now you can! These services can be very inexpensive.

STRATEGY #5:

Data Backup

If you've ever lost work because a file became corrupted or lost then you know that data backup really needs to be a religious experience. With remote offsite data backup services the entire process is automated and your data is safely and securely kept in several highly-managed and reliable datacenters around the world. Need to recover a single file? An entire server's worth? No problem, just sign on to the data backup website and tell the system what you want back.

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