

Brilliantly Managed IT: Selecting an Effective IT Service Provider

An expert guide to choosing the optimal IT provider for your business



The importance of IT support

In an increasingly digitalised working environment, your IT infrastructure is the backbone of many key processes and operations that make your business so successful. A technology issue or restriction could severely limit the efficiency and effectiveness of your company or hinder your growth.

Managing your IT systems in-house can be a strain on your company resources, diverting them from your wider business strategy. Alternatively, working with an expert IT provider, like Blue Saffron, results in consistent, seamless technical capabilities and ensures that technology is never a limitation on your business success.

It can be challenging to select an IT provider that will unlock your full business potential. Certain providers might appear to offer extensive services and promise the world, only then to not deliver when you need it most. To help steer you through the process and provide much needed clarity, we have created this extensive guide to selecting an IT provider, offering industry insights into the key qualities you should look for in a truly valuable Managed Service Provider (MSP).

This guide will teach you:

- What an MSP is and why you need one
- What you should expect from an IT provider
- The challenges an IT provider can solve
- Crucial questions to ask a potential IT provider
- The value of partnering with Blue Saffron





What is a Managed Service Provider?

An MSP is a third-party company that can take partial or full responsibility for managing your business' IT systems. An effective MSP typically provides a range of services, including generalised IT support, Cloud assistance, and cyber security help.

As technology continues to evolve, it is essential to have access to IT specialists who can help your business to keep pace with these rapid advancements. When you work with an MSP, you can either completely outsource every aspect of your IT management, or use your provider in conjunction with an in-house team for specific, targeted support or to fill skills gaps.

No matter how you choose to implement your support, the right MSP should provide innovative technology solutions that increase the efficiency, productivity and connectivity of your operations, and help move you towards achieving your specific goals.

First look: the qualities to expect from an IT provider

Before you agree to work with an IT provider, you should assess the qualities they offer and services they provide. If they cannot deliver or meet key expectations, you should eliminate them as a potential partner.

Bespoke support strategy

The support that your IT provider delivers should not only be tailored to your specific needs, but should complement your unique business strategy. Your IT provider should offer regular audits and strategy sessions to help you to create an IT roadmap that will drive your business towards success. IT support is about more than responding to issues when they arise, it should proactively prepare for and prevent potential challenges. Recruiters are being forced to balance efficiency against effectiveness, making the hiring process frustrating for all involved.

Guaranteed SLAs

Before you agree to work with an IT provider, you should carefully assess the Service Level Agreements they intend to work to, and request any appropriate revisions. The SLA is a good way to evaluate an MSP's intentions and commitment to the services they offer. An SLA should include performance metrics and expectations, laying out how quickly your chosen MSP will offer support. Typically, it should also include warranties, problem procedures and a termination process agreement. Securing a water-tight SLA early on sets clear expectations and ensures that your IT provider is held accountable.

Efficient services

As the cyber threat landscape continues to evolve and mature at an overwhelming pace, one of the key responsibilities of an IT provider is implementing robust and comprehensive security procedures. An effective MSP should help you adopt an adaptable security strategy that will help you avoid the negative consequences of a cyber attack. Additionally, as meeting regulatory compliance standards is becoming essential for all businesses handling sensitive data, your IT provider should help you to meet standards such as GDPR. An effective way to assess the cyber security expertise of your potential IT provider is to see whether they can help you to achieve an additional cyber security certification such as Cyber Essentials or Cyber Essentials Plus.

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Security and compliance

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IT Consultancy

Your IT provider should share their industry expertise to help you unlock the full potential of your IT and seamlessly integrate new technologies into your operations. By assessing your current state and your growth goals, an effective MSP will provide tailored IT advice and guide you through any upcoming projects. At Blue Saffron, our IT Consultancy team will support you at every stage of your technology journey, offering bespoke advice, IT design and architecture, and project delivery.

Cost-efficiency

The right IT provider will offer high-quality services for a predictable, fixed cost, allowing you to plan your budget in advance. Additionally, you should never be paying for technology services that are not actively benefitting or improving your business. Investing in the right IT provider should always be a cost-effective decision in the long run, as the IT support they provide should also help to boost the efficiency and productivity of your business and drive you towards success.

Diving deeper: the vital questions to ask

If an IT provider passes your initial assessments, you should still not hurry into a partnership with them. Take the time to ask them these 5 essential questions, to gain deeper insight into their working style, capabilities and values.

Can you introduce me to the team?

A good IT provider should view their working relationship with your business as a true partnership. Any successful partnership should be based on a personal, people-driven approach. Therefore, it is important to be introduced to the people who will make up the IT team you will be working with, so that you can assess their credentials and specialisms ahead of time. This also gives you an opportunity to evaluate whether their working style meshes well with that of your business.

Who are your partners?

An excellent way to assess the standard of an IT provider, is to evaluate their partnerships. The companies, vendors and distributors that they partner with provide the technologies that underpin many of their key services. If your MSP works with reliable and credible industry leaders, then the IT support services they can provide are more likely to be innovative and high-quality. By looking at their partners, you can also explore whether a potential provider has expertise in a wide range of relevant and useful areas of IT.

Do you work with any specific sectors?

Every sector faces unique and complex challenges. If an MSP has experience providing innovative IT solutions to specific industries, then they will gain in-depth knowledge of that sector. This allows them to tailor their IT services to particular industry requirements. For instance, Blue Saffron has notable expertise in the recruitment, professional services and accountancy sectors. While it is not entirely necessary for your IT provider to have worked with businesses in your industry, it is likely to give you and your technology a competitive edge.

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What is your company culture like?

A company's values can tell you a lot about what they will be like to work with. You should aspire to partner with an IT provider who will prioritise your business. You can assess their dedication to you by asking for information about the onboarding process, support meetings and number of hours they will assign to your company monthly. At Blue Saffron, we take a truly customer-first approach, taking the time to understand your business' unique aspirations and processes, while working with you to create a strategy aligned with your timelines and enabling your business goals.

How will you communicate results?

Transparency is crucial within any working relationship. Before you partner with an IT provider you should establish how they intend to communicate results to you, no matter whether they are positive or negative. It could be helpful to decide on the metrics that will be used to do this. These could include monthly reports or reviews on service levels and outcomes. Setting these expectations early on will help to maintain clear, efficient communication throughout your partnership.

Blue Saffron: IT for Productivity

At Blue Saffron we prioritise your productivity. We partner with medium-sized businesses, offering innovative and targeted IT solutions to help your business reach its true potential.

We complement your business with a team of experienced IT experts and productivity technology. As well as a comprehensive managed IT offering, we provide easy-to-read business dashboards which give you the visibility to make data-driven decisions. After you select your performance indicators, we can deliver you data insights in real time, allowing you to always stay in the loop and up to date.

Our productivity-first, customer-driven outlook sets us apart in the industry. Our commitment to client success is reflected in the positive results we have obtained.

98%

**Customer
satisfaction**

95%

**Response time
under 1 hour**

83%

**First contact
fix rate**



Invest in brilliantly managed IT with **Blue Saffron**

Investing in top-quality IT services lays the foundations for business success. At Blue Saffron, our unique combination of people, processes and productivity technology facilitates vast business leaps. With benefits ranging from strategic planning to efficient remediation to innovative solutions, we can transform the potential of your business through the power of IT.

Are you ready to experience brilliantly managed IT? Get in touch with a representative at Blue Saffron today to discuss a possible support plan.

Get in touch

