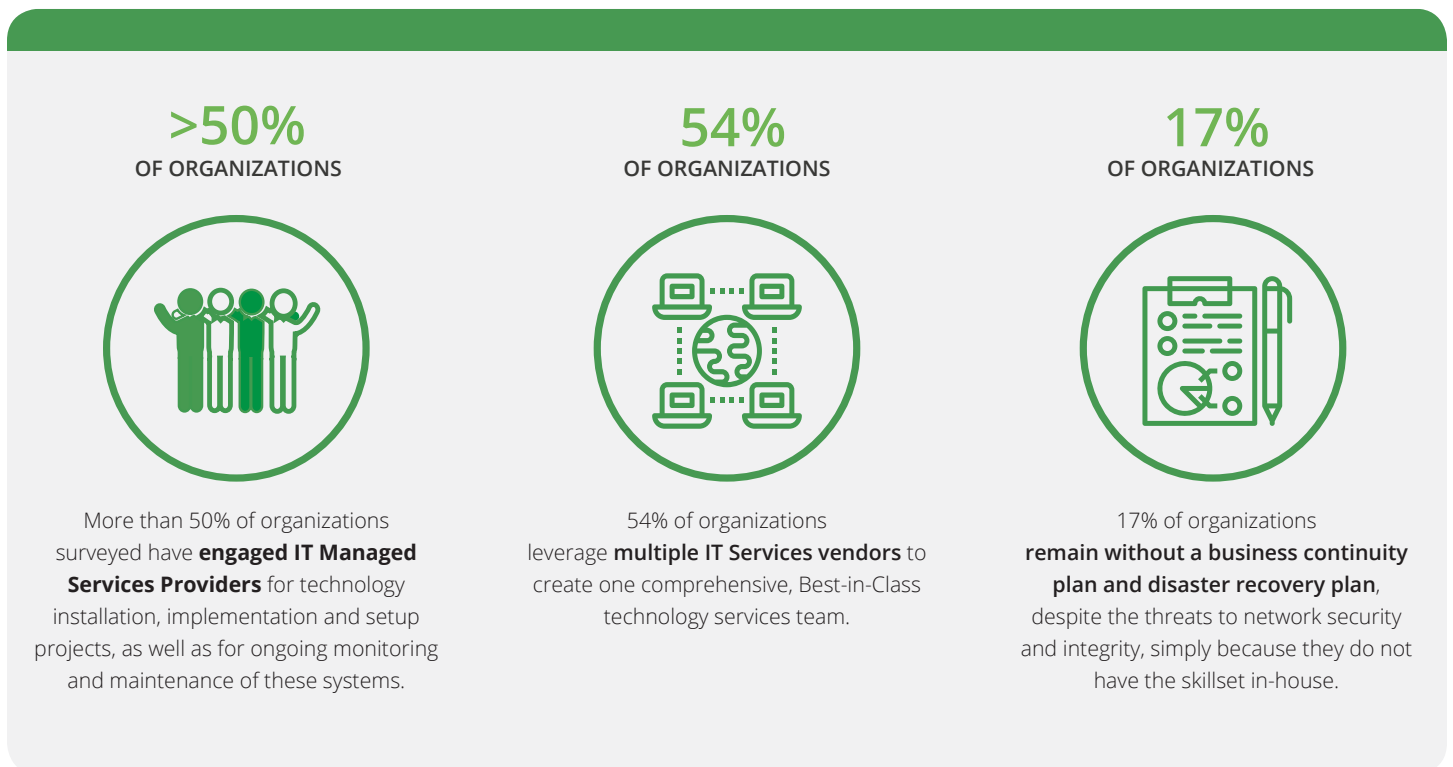# The IT Services Success Kit

How to Use a Managed Services Provider to Accelerate your Business Initiatives

Overview

Delivering IT services is an ongoing challenge for all organizations working with fixed budgets and limited resources. Today's business environment requires IT teams to continually respond to new initiatives or threats, quickly and precisely. While the important fundamentals of IT, such as reliability, availability, security, and manageability are crucial; rapid and scalable results are also mandatory for business success.

>50%	54%	17%
OF ORGANIZATIONS	OF ORGANIZATIONS	OF ORGANIZATIONS
More than 50% of organizations surveyed have **engaged IT Managed Services Providers** for technology installation, implementation and setup projects, as well as for ongoing monitoring and maintenance of these systems.	54% of organizations leverage **multiple IT Services vendors** to create one comprehensive, Best-in-Class technology services team.	17% of organizations **remain without a business continuity plan and disaster recovery plan**, despite the threats to network security and integrity, simply because they do not have the skillset in-house.

Assuring superior IT services requires consistently maintaining the optimal mix of technical skills and customer service to support the ever-changing requirements of today's dynamic IT infrastructures. With so many demands on in-house IT teams for installation, integration, training, and delivery methods—many organizations are turning to Managed Services Providers to leverage their specialized technical skills to complement the talent of the in-house teams.

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Organizations have two options when planning their IT services:

Option 1

Organizations can install, configure, manage, maintain, perform user training and support for all IT systems and services internally. This avenue is most often taken by large firms with generous IT budgets that can afford to have a broad range of full-time technical specialists on staff and who are not under pressure to optimize their IT spending.

Option 2

Organizations can outsource a select group of their IT services to a Managed Services Provider, to allow the in-house IT staff to focus on business-critical projects and the end user experience and to optimize their IT budget spending. A Managed Services Provider can assume IT operational responsibility for either a specific IT strategy, project or the entire department, due to their broad technology expertise and refined processes.

Choosing either option requires an examination of the organization's technical environment and IT requirements. The organization's current and expected challenges must also be considered. These challenges, which often surface as the team manages and grows their IT services, include keeping up with the rate of new technology adoption and keeping IT expenses in check. By exploring the factors affecting IT infrastructure, we will illustrate that Managed Services are not just simply outsourcing tasks, but can be an effective means of assuring best-in-class operations.

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Quality and Dependability versus Budget

Engaging a managed services provider is a strategic decision that can enhance operations and refocus employee skillsets where they are most effective. Managed Services give an organization the flexibility to reposition personnel budgets, to grow their intellectual capital and internal talent, rather than reducing them.

The organization's core offering brings in revenue, however this revenue is offset by overhead costs. Items such as personnel time, the CapEx to acquire assets to manage the core business, the OpEx to run operations, and the costs associated with securing new clients. Reducing operational costs is a key way that an organization can positively affect their budget.

>> **80% of network outages**
are due to changes.

>> **65% of IT budgets**
are spent just to keep the "lights on."

Sources: Cisco.com – Managed Services Market – Global Advancements 2013–2018, MarketsandMarkets

By assuring that core applications and supporting infrastructure are stable and secure, users can be more productive, and the competitive advantage will improve with added intellectual capital. IT directors and CIOs understand that sacrificing the quality and dependability of IT services can result in limited growth, and potentially a decrease in productivity.

Managed Services can:

>> Reduce recurring in-house costs by
30% to 40%.

>> Increase efficiency by
50% to 60%.

Sources: Cisco.com – Managed Services Market – Global Advancements 2013–2018, MarketsandMarkets

Retaining Talent

Finding high quality IT personnel is difficult. Network engineers, application developers, and information security professionals typically command high salaries and often companies settle for less experienced technology professionals who cannot adequately get the job done. These personnel challenges can add stress to other company resources.

2 OUT OF **5**

IT LEADERS AND IT PROFESSIONALS

2 out of 5 IT leaders and IT professionals say their organization **struggles with retaining IT talent**.

NEARLY **70%**

OF IT LEADERS

70

Nearly 70% of IT leaders note that this is a **widespread challenge across their IT department** and no specific skills are more fleeting than others.

Sources: TEKsystems.com – Survey of IT Leaders on Employee Retention

> *We needed to make changes to our network infrastructure; which was going to significantly impact the organization's uptime, and the skillsets required for this project were not in our staff. By utilizing a Managed Services Provider for this initiative, we were able to guarantee uptime and full infrastructure coverage for our networking, collaboration, data center, and security, while completing this task.*

— IT Director, Legal Services

Organizations engage IT services providers for a wide range of projects, as well as ongoing managed services. With the ever-evolving nature of technology, it is difficult, even for larger IT teams, to maintain the specific, current expertise and certifications for new technology—especially while performing the large number of daily IT tasks required to keep an organization's infrastructure humming and employees productive. The advancements in collaboration and mobility technologies have also driven the need for easy access to these specialized skillsets.

» **30.86% of organizations**
surveyed use IT services providers for network installation and setup and **28.19%** for unified communications installation and setup.

» **15.23% of organizations**
surveyed used IT services providers to setup and install their unified video systems and **47%** used managed services for their unified video systems.

» **50%+ of organizations**
engaging IT services providers for technology installation and setup projects, also engage them for Managed Services—ongoing care and maintenance.

» **54% of organizations**
use multiple IT services vendors to secure Best-in-Class technology services.

Source: 2017 U.S. IT Services Report – conducted by ResearchCorp.

Vendor Selection

Selecting an outsourced IT services vendor to fit business requirements and an organization's culture can be costly. In addition, finding a single IT services vendor, with all the expertise required by an organization, is not simple.

While 39% of the organizations surveyed desire the convenience of a single IT services vendor to handle all their needs, one service provider may not have all the necessary skillsets required. 61% of organizations surveyed preferred to use multiple vendors to either "spread their risk" or to assure they were leveraging best-in-class services (source: ResearchCorp 2017 IT Services Report).

Engaging an IT services provider as part of the IT strategy can add an experienced and broad view of the solutions implemented, and challenged faced, across many organizations. However, with so many providers in the market, how can an organization ensure the right fit and expertise level of the provider?

Fidelus Technologies has put together a two-part guide to assist the evaluation of IT services providers based upon the important and fundamental criteria for a successful partnership.

A Guide for Selecting a Managed Services Provider

PART 1

Is the MSP the correct fit for your organization?

While it may not seem obvious at first, finding a MSP which fits well with your organization is, in large part, a matter of predictability. Predictability is predicated upon work ethic, methodology, responsiveness, and most of all, understanding of your industry. This is the foundation upon which teams and individuals work well together.

Does the MSP have experience in your industry?

This is an extremely important question. Each industry operates differently and often has different priorities. A MSP that understands the inner workings and requirements of your industry is extremely valuable for assisting with the prioritizing of network and systems events, as well as categorizing and understanding the impact of those events on your specific business.

Will the MSP's team work well with your team?
Consider personalities, workflow, corporate culture and values.

You invest time building your team, with both the technical expertise and the soft skills to mesh well with the rest of your organization and your customers. An MSP should be no different. The MSP must integrate well with your management and staff and there must be cohesion up and down the chain of command. Discord can adversely impact the partnership and, if interactions between the teams become contentious, efficiency and predictability can and will degrade.

Is the MSP willing and able to adapt to your specific needs?

Every organization has preferences on how its users are supported. Similarly, MSP's have their own methods of providing support based on industry standards such as ITIL. A best-in-class MSP will maximize the efficiency of the services provided while also fitting into the mold of your corporate culture. This can be in the form of customizable dashboards, alerting systems, or something as simple as supporting multiple languages required for effective global corporate communication.

Does the MSP get "the basics" right?

A MSP must have the skill sets and processes in place for their service business to operate efficiently and at a scale in order to deliver high-quality, cost-effective solutions. Below is a "must-have" list of items to look for in a MSP to ensure proper support:

- **Process**

  Process is critical. A well-documented and maintained process leads to predictability and efficiency. Ask to see a typical process document to understand how the MSP operates. The process document will help demonstrate how your organizations will fit together. Two key areas are IT Services Transition (Change, Knowledge and Project Management) and IT Services Operations (Event, Incident and Problem Management and Request Fulfillment). A service provider with a strong working knowledge of these concepts and established processes will deliver a higher quality of service to your organization and, importantly, show you how and why.

- **Tools**

  Ask about the tools a MSP utilizes to deliver services. Are the tools industry standard or customized? Industry standard tools are more likely to keep up with the changes in platforms but provide a more generic performance of tasks. Customized tools, which are built specifically for your systems, require a lot of effort to support platform changes, and can potentially hinder progress. Ask for a list of tools the MSP uses to understand the MSPs internal operations.

- **Certification**

  Inquire about the skill set of the MSP's staff. An experienced MSP will have a well-certified staff in all the areas of expertise for which they provide services. The MSP staff must have a greater collective knowledge than your internal staff and certifications will demonstrate a minimum level of competency. Beyond the individual certifications are MSP company certifications. These can include the manufacturers they support, such as Cisco and Microsoft, as well as industry certifications designed to protect your data.

- **Necessary Partnerships**

  A MSP's efficiency and consistency translates to being well-versed in the best tools. Tools such as ServiceNow, Cisco/Microsoft Collaboration tools, Enterprise Security, and many other hardware and software tools. The best MSP's will extend these partnerships to your organization, maximizing value for your team.

- **Experience**

  The experience a MSP brings to the organization will determine how quickly they can analyze the symptoms of the reported issues and turn that information into actionable efforts for resolution. For newer technology, deep experience may be hard to find. However, most new technologies are based upon older technologies (ask about the team's experience in all areas of interest).

- **References**

  Be sure to get references from the MSP's customers in your industry. Ask for feedback on the MSP's performance, both good and bad, and areas where the MSP excels, to assure there is a good match for your organization.

When to Engage a MSP?

Timing is everything. The decision of when to partner with a MSP depends on a variety of factors that influence the engagement timing decision.

- **During a Budget Cycle**
  Do you have the cost built it into your annual budget for a MSP? Can you demonstrate ROI to help justify the cause?

- **New Systems/Infrastructure Implementation**
  Bringing new systems online in your environment can be a difficult task. Often, a third party is hired to perform the initial implementation. With new systems comes the requirement to retool your staff to accommodate the technical and process related tasks that accompany a new system.

- **Staff Turnover**
  Every time a staff member leaves or a new staff member is brought on board, they will need training—there is always a learning curve. With a MSP, the learning curve is limited to the inner workings of the organizational culture and processes rather than the systems and infrastructure themselves.

- **Staff Skillset**
  New systems require new skillsets. This isn't just limited to brand new systems. A simple upgrade of an existing system can also take on a life of its own with respect to learning.

- **Poor Team Performance/Increase Operational Efficiency**
  Over time, organizations become more demanding. The demands can result from pressure to do more with less. Improving IT team performance cannot be fully remedied by a MSP. However, performance can be augmented and accelerated by the introduction of a MSP with processes based upon industry standards.

Does the chosen Managed Services Provider add value to your team?

PART 2

Now that a MSP has been chosen and they have been integrated into the team, the next area to evaluate is whether that MSP is adding value to the organization. A good managed services provider maintains current knowledge of the industries they service and their customer's requirements, consistently improving upon their services to meet demand. Below are a set of tactics to use when evaluating your current MSP

- **Feedback**
  Technology changes fast as do your organization's "most important items." The only way a MSP will know what is truly important to your organization is if you provide regular feedback. Further, the ability and willingness of the MSP to take your feedback and act on it is important. A MSP that receives and acts upon feedback in a timely manner, most likely has a high level of operational maturity..

- **Regular Touchpoints**
  Receiving feedback is vital, but the method in which this is delivered is also important. Does the MSP send out regular surveys? Are your account managers meeting with you regularly? Are there recurring, live interactions between the teams; outside of addressing specific incidents? A structured feedback process is more predictable. Predictability leads to efficiency which leads to cost savings and an increased quality of service.

  A mature MSP has regular reviews for open and recently closed incidents with the technical team, and feedback meetings with managers and executives. These touchpoints assure that the MSP can address any concerns and maintain a clear understanding of your ongoing organization needs. A MSP with these operating processes will best serve your organization in both the short and long term.

- **Feedback Cycle**
  Many opportunities for innovation, improvement, evolutionary leaps, and increasing ROI come from fixing or improving something that is not working optimally. It is extremely rare to get everything right the first time—what was right yesterday may not be what is right today. If the services provider is up to speed on best practices, such as Continual Service Improvement, they will schedule feedback meetings to be timed with changes and adjustments. This allows real-time feedback to be addressed and plans revised, as required. The ITIL model provides some extremely helpful processes to integrate ideas and improvements into your service.

- **Efficiencies Provided**

  Lastly, a managed service provider should be efficient and provide consistency to your organization. Efficiency can mean the MSP:

  - Resolves more incidents than your in-house helpdesk

  - Proactively catches issues before they become disruptive to your business

  - Helps you bring in higher value customers and a higher-quality of service

  - Allows you to re-focus your internal resources more effectively

The tools to evaluate the right MSP vary among organizations. These guidelines help you qualify the optimal partner for your organization and/or evaluate the success of an existing MSP partnership.