

Secrets to Managed Service Success



Budgets, staff bandwidth, best practices. There are many reasons for employing a Managed Service Provider (MSP) to oversee your organization's network. While this is a necessary step for many organizations to remain effective, it can also be a scary jump into the unknown. To help guide you through this realm, here are some important things to look for with a potential MSP before switching over to their service:

Technology

What type of integration is possible with your network?

While an MSP will bring best practices for managing your organization's network to the table, it's important that the MSP still works with you on your terms. The MSP should be able to provide all the systems, monitoring, and support services your organization needs currently and for the foreseeable future.

Process

Does the MSP have defined process and procedure for managing your network?

When your network suffers from a critical failure, every second that it's offline costs your organization money. To ensure that these outages are kept to a minimum and fixed quickly, choose an MSP that has a defined process for responding to each potential problem. The processes you should ask about include:

- Network Issues: Alerting, Reporting, Escalation, and Action
- Standard System Configurations
- Quality Assurance

Qualifications

What qualifications and certifications does the MSP's staff maintain?

MSPs can be certified two ways, and both are important to look for. Each consultant that works with you or on your organization's network should possess manufacturer and industry certifications. On top of that, each MSP should have company-wide certifications that ensure its policies and procedures are up to industry standards. You should also look for MSPs that hire consultants with higher education backgrounds – these are the ones that are going to understand your organization and its mission more fully.

Control

How much control are you able to maintain over your systems after moving to the MSP?

In many MSP models, clients are required to become deeply ingrained into the MSP's operating procedures to the point where they no longer own their data. A quality MSP will meet your organization's needs at the level and in the manner necessary for you to be successful. The easiest way to discover the answer to this question is to ask an MSP how difficult (including the steps required) and expensive it would be to disconnect from its service after you get started with them.

Responsiveness

Is a high level of customer service and responsiveness built into the MSP's everyday culture?

The biggest fear when moving to an MSP is that you'll just become another number on a call sheet when something goes wrong. Guard against these kinds of engagements by judging the way the company responds to your questions and needs before signing the agreement. A MSP's culture should be built around being responsive to your issues and providing stellar customer service. They should be treating your network as if it was their own.

Price and value

What are the costs involved with moving to this MSP? Are there any hidden costs?

How much will it cost your organization to get started with this MSP? Often MSPs can help organizations cut costs overall, but the initial costs can be tough for the budget to bear. Also, be aware of any hidden costs, including costs stemming from the MSP switching platforms.

How well does the MSP understand your business/market/mission?

If your MSP is unable to understand your organization's goals, mission, and other critical pieces of information that makes you tick, it will never become a valued resource for your organization. An MSP without a firm background in the nonprofit and association market will have a hard time understanding your organization's priorities, which can lead to issues down the road.

