

The Admin Guide to IT Support Vendors **BEFORE Signing Up**

The First 10 Questions

Courtesy of Maybric Management

Use these questions to evaluate a potential fit for your organization's IT support needs from an IT managed services company (MSP). Each question has a general rating guide to the level of quality the MSP is representing.

1. How is billing determined? (Is there a billing/cost table?)

IT Managed Services Companies (MSPs) will typically have some sort of combination of calculations to determine your monthly bill. Usually, the calculations are based on counts of users, devices, locations and service hours. Understanding how your bill might change month-to-month as a result of your business change is critical.

Premium = Offers monthly or yearly contract and possibly pre-paid support hours.

Articulates exactly how billing is calculated however complex the formula.

Average = Offers pre-paid support hours, or monthly contract for support.

Communicates in generalities on how the bill is calculated.

Risky = Only offers break/fix support on an hourly charge basis.

2. What exactly is covered and not covered for service in the contract?

The contract should document explicitly what kind of service is covered and what services might be an extra fee or require a separate quote. Understanding types of services covered and not covered will help in comparing vendor offerings and pricing.

Premium = Has a table or easily understood delineation of common IT support services and corresponding costs.

Average = Has a table articulating support services included and not included but does not necessarily have details where the line of covered support ends and where additional fees begin.

Risky = Does not delineate on what is covered or types of work addressed within certain terms of an agreement. The costs might be all hourly but there is no description of what services are included for the hourly rate.

3. What is your cancellation policy?

The contract should document a cancellation policy. Typically, an MSP requires a written 30-day or 60-day notice of cancellation. You want to know what to expect if there is reason to cancel, especially if there are financial consequences for certain cancellation options.

Premium = Requires a 30-day notice or offers month-to-month billing with easy out.

Average = Requires a 30-day to 90-day notice.

Risky = Has no documented cancellation policy.

4. What are your live support hours? (Is there a rate table matched to the support hours table?)

The contract should specify when you are able to call for live support and how you get to someone that can assist in getting you a solution to your problem. Additionally, there should be multiple ways to open conversation on problems such as calls, email, website submission, texts/sms, etc.

Premium = Offers extended business hours coverage with emergency coverage for all else.

Average = Offers business hours coverage and limited emergency coverage options.

Risky = Offers limited live coverage and relies heavily on voicemail and callbacks.

5. Will I encounter AI at any step or avenue during a support request?

With the advent of AI chatbots and auto-attendants, your support requests can be handled expediently. The question most people have is regarding the difficulty in getting a real person in the conversation if AI is not presenting a workable solution.

Premium = Might or might not have AI integration, but can articulate how to promptly get a real person into the communication.

Average = Might or might not have AI integration, but require a communication that is not real-time communication (e.g. email).

Risky = Heavily relies on generic AI for client facing problems or defaults to voicemail/email for all support requests.

6. Do you have a list of software used in your client support stack?

The vast majority of MSPs have a list of software, often referred to as a “stack”, that are employed in client support. You should be informed of the names/brands of software loaded onto your equipment.

Premium = Is transparent and thorough with exact names on the tools employed.

Average = Speaks in generalities and articulates more of the function of the software than the actual brand name.

Risky = Is ignorant, reluctant, cagey or defensive about revealing the details or plans to use mostly what is already present in your environment.

7. What do each of those software tools do?

Ask that the answers back to you be in layman’s terms. Some understanding of what service and protection you gain from hosting these tools in your IT environment will help you understand future fixes or changes regarding those tools.

Premium = Gives verbal and written information about the tools.

Average = Gives verbal information about the tools.

Risky = Gives confusing verbal or written information about the tools.

8. What are the differences among your levels of support?

Most mature MSPs have different tiers of support which might have differed pricing of labor, function of tools and services supplied. Most MSPs will gladly move you from lower tiers to higher tiers. Going in the opposite direction, higher tier to lower tier, will potentially create some interruption of business and/or service. Start conservatively at a lower tier, if you feel it necessary.

Premium = Gives clear written detail about plan differentiation.

Average = Gives clear written detail about plan differentiation.

Risky = Does not offer different tiers or every client is “custom”.

9. What do you outsource versus in-house for interacting with my account?

MSPs often use outsourcing to fill critical gaps in service. While outsourcing in itself is not bad, it is best to understand what services you get or might use that are outsourced versus hired internally to their organization.

Premium = Is transparent about outsourced services or processes when asked.

Average = Is transparent when asked or might be a little hesitant to share.

Risky = Might not have any outsourcing, lack outsourcing and have major gaps, or are reluctant to share details about outsourcing.

10. Do you have niche expertise?

Large and medium-sized MSPs might have a niche or two on which they focus which gives them some familiarity with the typical environment and line of business software at those organizations. The MSP does not have to have a niche fitting your organization, but it is a nice plus.

Premium = Has multiple clients in the same or similar niche as your own.

Average = Has personnel that have serviced the niche in the past.

Risky = Has little or no experience supporting the organization's industry category.

If you want more personalized assistance in evaluating MSPs, contracts and services, please contact us at info@maybric.com or direct message us on our LinkedIn company page-- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/maybric>