

Breaking the cycle of disappointment

The London small business
owner's **guide to buying IT**



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Buying the technology services you need to succeed... without getting burned

If you're an IT support services procurement virgin you're probably feeling a little unsure about the whole buying process. You probably have loads of questions spinning round your head, like: How can I choose a supplier when everybody seems to be saying the same thing? How do I make sure I don't get ripped off? What are the warning signs to look out for? We know it can be a daunting first investment.

If you're a more experienced IT support services buyer you'll probably be familiar with this scenario:

Like any new relationship with a supplier, things start out full of promise and proactivity, but once the honeymoon period is over, what was promised quickly starts to fade until there's just not the same level of care there once was. Your issues start taking much longer to get resolved. You end up feeling more like a number than a valued customer.



Eventually you find yourself having to start the cycle again by looking for an alternative supplier.

The delighted long-term customers who chose Techsolve have successfully broken this cycle of disappointment and frustration. We've taken the headache of their day-to-day IT challenges away, so they can get back to doing what they do best - leading, growing and scaling their business.

We've developed this guide to give you our honest, balanced advice to help you make sure your next IT support services procurement decision is the right one for your business.

Obviously, the easy thing for us to say would be "hire Techsolve!" ... but you'd see straight through that.

Whatever your level of experience and type of business, this short buyer's guide gives you a framework to properly assess and benchmark your options.

We'll still be here, ready to help, when you've seen for yourself just how well we stack up against the competition.

For the purposes of this guide, we're not going to labour the point on the reasons why you might decide to outsource your IT services. Essentially, ask yourself, **"Is managing our IT services really something I/we are qualified or want to do?"** And perhaps more importantly, **"Do I/we have the time/skills to keep up with the advances in technology if we keep it all in-house?"**

Four great business-oriented questions to sniff out whether an IT managed service provider is full of bullsh*t or brilliance

Naturally you're looking for an approach that will meet your needs and deliver the best value. These questions will help you to evaluate the suitability of each managed service provider you're researching so you can shortlist the best fit for you.



1. What would your approach be to managing our IT effectively?



Make sure the provider has a process behind their approach. Be sure that they are listening to and recognising your specific needs — rather than palming you off with a vanilla solution.

As a small business you want any solutions you put in place to be capable of growing and changing with your needs. Make sure you're confident that a provider has the capacity and flexibility to do this. Challenge providers to demonstrate that they're really prioritising what is important for you (rather than what's most convenient or profitable for them). And make sure they're going to be setting clear goals for your IT service delivery, measuring progress towards meeting those goals and being transparent to support you in making decisions on next steps.

2. How would you help us to solve problems?



Finding out about the way a provider would work with you and your team to solve business-level problems gives an indication of the working relationship you would have and if they're a good fit.

From the speed and responsiveness of reactive support desks to the level of proactive monitoring and business reviews/workshops, understanding each provider's different approach will help you to identify what type of problem solving best suits your way of working together.

Look for a provider willing to invest time in truly understanding your business and tech processes, priorities, and plans. Get a sense for how committed the provider is to being a strategic partner rather than just a supplier. Providers willing to put the effort in to truly understanding your business plans and those capable of thinking ahead to pre-empt and prevent potential future issues before they arise are the ones who will have the most positive impact on your business success.

3. What would you do to ensure the best value for our budget?



Listen out for how different providers will support you with business reviews and budgeting to evaluate what approach enables you to deliver the service you need in a cost-effective way.

Understand how a provider will demonstrate return on investment. After all, if you're investing money to achieve a desired goal or solution you want to know it's worth it. Depending on your circumstances, you might want to set a fixed monthly budget towards delivering your IT management plan going forward, or you might want to take a more flexible approach. Make sure you understand what sort of options providers are willing to offer.

4. How would you help us make informed decisions about IT management?



What you're looking to find out here is how the provider would organise and present the data about your IT systems and services so that you are empowered to make decisions on next steps.

Are they trustworthy and transparent? Will they offer you guidance and consultancy or just leave you to try to make sense of everything yourself?

Working in partnership with you, your provider should be helping to shape your technology investments, allowing the technology to be the enabler of business growth that it should be. Don't let a provider bulldoze you into big IT investments you don't need.

Three vital signs your provider knows how people work as well as how technology works

Technology is only part of the equation when buying IT managed services. Any service is only as good as the people providing it. It can often be the people skills and human connection that makes the biggest difference in helping you to separate the wheat from the chaff. Here are some things to consider:

1.

People who aren't hiding behind technology

Relationships are pivotal to business success. Are the people you're dealing with fully paid-up members of the "boring-confusing-and-hard-to-communicate-with-technical-expert" club, or have they got real people skills that tell you they truly care about doing a good job? Do they just communicate in jargon and buzzwords or are they straight-talking people who you feel like you're having a genuine conversation with?



2.

Open, honest, frequent communication

Salespeople usually have all the chat, but once you've signed the contract, you'll probably never see them again. What about the people who will actually be working with you and your business day to day? How do they communicate? During the sales process, were you set realistic expectations? Is the provider delivering on its promises and being responsive? Are you enthusiastically being given real options and ideas or being steered down a set path? Is the provider driving a process or are you having to do more work than you should be?



3.

Personal touches that show you're valued

You want to be confident that any provider you choose will be accessible and easy to work with. How quickly and professionally your provider deals with you during the sales process is a good indicator of how well they will deal with your tickets and issues once you're a paying customer. Has the provider's founder or someone from the leadership team shown any personal interest in you and your business or are they busy on the golf course? All these things will give you clues as to whether you're going to be just a number or a valued customer.



Unusually great IT, cybersecurity and connectivity support for London's small businesses and commercial property owners

*"What I love most about you
guys is that you're not sh*t"*

Happy Techsolve customer

There are loads of IT support service providers in London, but it's not easy finding one that isn't crap.

We're determined to help you make your next IT support services procurement decision the right one for your business and hope this guide has provided some useful advice to set you on the right path.

We'd love to find out more about you and your business and answer any of your questions. If you're interested, please get in touch. There really is no such thing as a stupid question.

We know it can be a daunting and confusing. Don't suffer in silence.



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