Managed IT Services

Eliminating technology pains in small businesses

Having a complete IT department is not a viable solution for most small businesses, and very few small companies can afford to deploy even one permanent IT employee. Fortunately, there is an emerging and quickly growing service known as "Managed IT Services" to help.

For small businesses in today's high-tech society, Information Technology (IT) has become a significant consideration. Small business owners are under constant pressure to conduct business more efficiently and improve the productivity of its employees, while at the same time reduce costs. In addition to these normal business challenges, many small businesses are frustrated by the difficulties of dealing with new emerging technologies. Implementing new technology is a challenging job for small business owners and can cause numerous difficulties in day-to-day operations. Computers often are struck with problems such as spam, virus, and security threats, and server and email access malfunctions cause employees to sit idle. Company systems often do not operate at their optimal level to fully satisfy the business needs, and a huge amount of downtime is experienced waiting for technicians to come and solve each problem. These small system disruptions and downtime add up, and greatly affect the revenue of the company. The bottom line is: most small companies today do not experience the best performance possible from their IT applications.

The growth of small businesses is often slowed down by lack of handling of IT infrastructure properly. Instead of focusing on revenue generating activities, small business owners are stuck trying to find solutions for

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technology problems. As smaller companies are increasingly becoming more dependent on IT systems, it has become very crucial to find cost effective ways to manage technology. Growth-oriented companies need a well-organized IT infrastructure so that they can focus on the business instead of trying to solve IT failures. However, having a complete IT department is not a vible solution for most small businesses, and very few small companies can afford to deploy even one permanent IT employee. Fortunately, there is an emerging and quickly growing service known as "Managed IT Services" that is proving to be quite helpful in managing small business technology.

"...Managed services provide affordable solutions to the complex technology problems of small businesses for a fixed monthly fee."

What are Managed IT Services?

Managed IT services are provided by an outside firm or IT consulting company. These days, a growing number of IT vendors, resellers, and telecom carriers are providing managed services based on remote, proactive monitoring of company networks on an ongoing basis – with minimal involvement of the small business owners. Managed Service Providers (MSPs) employ consultants who specialize in small business networks, computer support, and security. Generally, managed IT services are delivered from a remote location via the Internet, but on-site proactive and emergency services are also provided when necessary. Services range from basic monitoring to fully managed services. Overall support for day-to-day operations and on-demand support for any other major need is also provided by these IT consulting groups. Managed services are usually provided on flat monthly fee or per device basis.

Types of services

There is growing variety of services that are provided by IT consultants or Managed Service Providers. Broad categories include:

- Computer & Server Support
- Data Backup & Disaster Recovery
- Network Security
- Custom Software Solutions
- Remote Network Monitoring
- Technology Evaluation & Planning

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Computer & Server Support

Regular maintenance and monitoring of company computers is essential to optimized desktop performance. IT consulting companies offer various solutions for ensuring that computers are functioning properly and are protected against all of the latest technology threats and disasters. Consultants also provide troubleshooting services and recommendations to prevent the same problem from happening again. Solutions also include server installation and administration.

Remote Network Monitoring

Remote monitoring of the critical components of a network such as servers and firewalls is also provided by managed service providers. Consultants troublehoot problems remotely to minimize network downtime. With automatic alerting systems, issues are resolved before they can significantly impact network performance.

Data Backup & Disaster Recovery

Backing up data is essential and should not be ignored, yet many small businesses do not perform backups. In a remote backup facility, a backup of files is made regularly over the Internet, and files are stored in a secure, off-site data storage facility, requiring no tape or hardware. Remote Backup and Online Backup Serices help small businesses avert data loss in case of any disaster.

Network Security

Small businesses need computer and network security even more than large businesses. This is because small businesses are often the primary target of hackers who can more easily attack the smaller networks. IT consulting compaies provide tools and practices such as spam management and firewall management to help protect the small businesses from hackers, viruses, and spam.

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Custom Software Solutions

IT consultants recommend and provide custom designed software solutions according to the unique needs of each small business. Depending on the project needs and requirements, IT consultants help small businesses determine the technology best suited to their business needs.

Technology Evaluation & Planning

Most small business owners employ an “ad-hoc” approach to dealing with technology, with no long term plan for future technology needs. IT consulting companies provide a comprehensive computer and network assessment, and evaluate the current IT setup to suggest possible changes to maximize technology effectiveness for the small business.

Break/Fix model vs. Managed Services: Key Benefits of Managed Services

Most small companies use the “break/fix model” of technology management: when technology fails, a consultant is called in to fix the problem and the company pays a fee for the service. This method results in repeated downtime and lost productivity. The problem with this model is that consultants are not motivated to keep the client’s network and systems running efficiently because the consultant makes more money when the technology breaks down.

Small business owners should consider the managed IT services solution for several reasons. Managed services provide affordable solutions to the complex technology problems of small businesses for a fixed monthly fee. Technology experts are fully focused on keeping the systems of the company up and running because repeated technology failures means higher costs to them. Therefore, the managed services model is beneficial to both the client and the technology expert because small businesses have the advantage of lower rates and better services while technology experts get the fixed monthly fee from multiple customers.

“...Managed IT Services help small business owners by simplifying IT operations and improving the reliability of networks. Instead of spending time worrying about technology, small business owners can stay focused on growing their businesses.”

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With managed services, small business owners have access to external technology experts who are constantly available to monitor and fix company networks. Managed IT services also provide small businesses with access to a wide array of tools that are normally assets of larger companies only. By letting IT consultants manage their technology, small businesses can keep the network protected against the latest security breaches, as well as reap the benefits of a larger IT team working for their company at very little cost.

With remote monitoring and maintenance of the network, technology problems are resolved before they can disrupt the business, and network and hardware performance is greatly improved, with a significant decrease in network downtime. This increased efficiency leads to increased employee productivity and optimized return on investment (ROI).

Managed IT Services help small business owners by simplifying IT operations and improving the reliability of networks. Instead of spending time worrying about technology, small business owners can stay focused on growing their businesses.

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