

HOW TO CHOOSE A MANAGED SERVICE PROVIDER (MSP)

YOUR CHECKLIST FOR FINDING THE RIGHT MSP FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Choosing the right Managed Service Provider (MSP) is a critical decision for your company. Your MSP will provide you with a wide range of IT services, giving you access to essential IT knowledge across security, infrastructure, applications, cloud computing and day to day IT support. They play a vital role in negating risk for your business and addressing potential security vulnerabilities so that rather than managing day-to-day IT tasks, you can concentrate on what you do best. So, how do you choose an MSP?

We recommend you ask a lot of questions – at [Technica](#), we are always happy to talk. Do they understand your business? Do they have the expertise and the infrastructure to support you today and as your business grows? Are they offering a cutting-edge IT infrastructure to take your business to the next level? Are they reliable and resilient?

Let's start with twenty key questions you should be asking to help make an informed decision.

01 HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN IN BUSINESS?

How long has the MSP been in operation? Do they have the expertise and experience to guide you now and as your organisation grows? Not that we have anything against a young or growing company – we all have to start somewhere (we started in a garage!)

02 WILL THEY PASS A CREDIT CHECK?

Your priority is minimising risk to your business, so if the MSP and/or its directors have any historical issues with insolvency, that's a red flag. [Experian Business Express](#) can provide commercial credit reports, and you can check an MSP's basic registration and financials free of charge via [Companies House](#).

03 ARE THEY TRANSPARENT?

Partnering with an MSP is about reducing risk to your business, so you don't want to expose yourself to risk with an MSP that's hiding financial issues. Are they willing to be open and transparent about their finances (historical and current), business direction and plans for the future?

04 CAN THEY GROW WITH YOUR COMPANY?

If you are planning on a long-term relationship, it's important that the MSP is capable of meeting the needs of your business now and in the future. Do they have a growth plan? How many customers can they serve? What are their plans for investing in their own business?

05 WHAT ARE THEIR ACCREDITATIONS?

Ask for proof of their accreditations – an MSP should want to share their qualifications. Cyber Essentials certification means they have been audited for their security controls. Accreditation by the IASME demonstrates their commitment to cyber security with a government-backed standard and their commitment to securing your sensitive data.

06 CAN YOU VISIT THE OFFICES AND MEET THE TEAM?

You can get a good feel for a company by visiting its offices and meeting its people. While most MSPs have a head office, be mindful that they may offer their staff flexible working-from-home options, which is not a negative but may require some creative thinking to get a feel for the team. If the MSP doesn't seem keen, then you need to ask yourself why.

07 CAN YOU MEET THE DIRECTORS/PARTNERS?

If the directors are willing to make time to meet you, they value your custom. It's also a good opportunity to ask them some of the more broad questions about their company and their future plans for it.

08 COULD YOU WORK WELL WITH THEM?

A good working relationship with your MSP is essential. Can you meet the people you will be dealing with on a regular basis? While it's a professional working relationship, healthy human interaction is important, and it's good to know before you make a decision whether the people are a good fit for you and your team.

09 WHAT INVESTMENT HAVE THEY MADE IN THEIR SUPPORT TOOLS AND IT INFRASTRUCTURE?

You need to know that your MSP can provide you with the appropriate level of support and IT infrastructure. Can they ensure business continuity should the worst happen? Is their infrastructure robust enough to deal with the peaks and troughs of demand from multiple clients? Essentially you need the reassurance that whatever your needs are, they are going to be scalable, resilient and secure enough to handle it.

10 WHAT ARE THEIR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLAS)?

A service level agreement defines the level of service they can or are willing to provide for you. It will include details on the type of service, how to report problems, their response times, support hours, what happens outside of normal hours, how sensitive and confidential data is handled, and your responsibilities, e.g. keeping up-to-date on virus protection. This is the standard that they hold themselves to, so ask how they evaluate their performance against their SLAs for other clients. After all, having an SLA is one thing, but checking that it is being met successfully is the only way to verify performance.

11 DO THEY PROVIDE REPORTING?

You need to be able to see exactly how your managed IT services are performing. Regular reporting will flag up potential problems so that you and your MSP can work together to make changes and plan to avoid unexpected issues moving forward.

12 WHAT DO THEIR CLIENTS SAY?

Ask to see references from a range of companies of all shapes and sizes. Is the MSP willing to let you speak to some of their customers? Existing customer feedback provides valuable insight into what your working relationship might look like.

13 DO THEY OUTSOURCE?

Knowing what services, if any, are outsourced by your MSP is important. You need to know what functions are managed by a third party and how you're protected should they fail.

14 HOW MANY STAFF DO THEY HAVE?

Does the MSP have enough staff to deliver on its Service Level Agreements (SLA)? Understaffing causes problems, so you want to know that it has enough manpower to deliver on your SLA at all times.

15 IS THERE ENOUGH RESOURCE?

It's not just about staffing levels. Do they have the IT infrastructure and computing power to deliver on their Service Level Agreement? Your MSP should be able to show you how they handle increased demand and share performance levels to demonstrate their capability.

16 WHAT'S THEIR EMPLOYMENT PROCESS?

People make a company, so how the MSP employs its staff is integral to its success. You assume they employ the best people, but ask how they recruit. Do they prefer pre-qualified staff or in-house training? Do they offer ongoing training? What about criminal record checks? You want to know that your sensitive data is safe in their hands.

17 ARE THEIR PEOPLE PERSONABLE?

When you work with people on a daily basis, you want those relationships to be positive ones. A good working relationship with the people responsible for your service provision means a smooth business relationship and mutual success.

18 WHEN IS THE HELPDESK OPEN?

You need to know when support is available (or not). Does the MSP have someone available 24/7? If something happens outside normal working hours, who do you call? Your MSP should have this detailed in your Service Level Agreement.

19 ARE STAFF TRAINED AND ACCREDITED FOR THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES?

Leveraging technology to create opportunities for efficiency, growth, and scalability is vital in today's rapidly evolving landscape. Does the MSP have a formal training structure? How are staff trained and certified? You need to rely on your MSP to be up to date with the latest technology and have fully trained and certified staff so that your business can quickly respond to market changes and trends.

20 HAVE THEY OFFERED A FREE AUDIT?

A good MSP will value your business before they've even secured it and offer you a free IT audit. This will help them gain insight into your organisation and identify areas for improvement that you might have missed, laying a solid foundation for a mutually successful working relationship moving forward.

Exercising due diligence when choosing a Managed Service Provider is imperative. The success of your MSP will directly impact the success of your business. Avoid making a mistake by doing your research, understanding the fine print, and knowing and asking for what you need. In essence, your MSP will be part of your team and should be held to the same level of expectations as an internal staff member.

HAVE YOU GOT IT ALL COVERED? IF YOU'RE READY TO FIND OUT MORE – [BOOK A DISCOVERY CALL.](#)