

When to Change Your IT Provider

Why Choosing the Right IT Provider Matters

For many small-to-medium sized businesses in the UK, IT is no longer simply ‘in the background’; it underpins everything the business does from managing email and file storage to managing customer data and daily operations.

Because of this, your IT provider is a key business partner in determining how well your business operates.

A good partner will:

- Keep systems running reliably
- Protect your business from cybersecurity threats
- Improve the efficiency of your team

Conversely, a poor partner will:

- Create frequent service interruptions for your business
- Cause staff frustration
- Put your data at risk.

One of the biggest challenges the majority of businesses face is that they remain with their current IT provider longer than they need to. Typically, this is due to a lack of understanding about what constitutes “good” IT support or service.

This guide has been prepared to assist you with:

- Recognising warning signals
- Determining whether it would be beneficial to changing providers
- Understanding how to perform a safe service transition

The Role of an IT Support Provider

An IT service provider needs to provide far more than simply react when trouble occurs. A good IT service provider provides the following support:

Daily Support

- Daily support to staff including login issues, email access, software error

Security Management

- Security management protecting your systems from threats with updates, monitoring and controls.

System Monitoring

- System Monitoring to identify any issues before they can develop into serious problems.

Strategic Guidance

- Strategic Guidance on advice for improvements, upgrades and future planning.

Business Continuity

- Business Continuity should provide backup, recovery and resilience to keep the business up and running between issues.

If your service provider is only reactive to issues you are missing the greatest potential of the service provider to provide a high degree of value.



Signs Your IT Provider May Not Be Meeting Your Needs

The following signs indicate whether your IT provider is able to provide the support you need:

Long Wait Time for Resolution

- It takes a long time to acknowledge issues,
- The staff is often left waiting for assistance.

Recurring Unresolved Issues

- The same problems happen over and over,
- No long-term solution has been put in place to fix them.

Unproductive Monitoring of Your System

- Problems are addressed only after they occur,
- systems are never checked on a regular basis.

Difficult to Communicate

- Technical info is vague or hard to understand,
- infrequent and confusing status updates.

Obscure Invoicing

- Unexpected charges,

- little transparency with billing.

Security Issues

- Lack of a defined security plan from IT provider,
- using outdated security tools.

Old Technology Suggestions

- No suggestions on how to improve,
- all systems are behind the times and would be very difficult or costly to upgrade.

No Formal Growth Planning

- No long-term plan for growth has been created
- There is no formal IT-plan that will allow me to grow with the organisation.

Common Frustrations Businesses Experience

There is a lot of frustration among SMEs due to the fact that:

- They're always having the same problem every month.
- They do not know what they're paying for.
- Their service provider only reacts to them when something goes wrong.
- They're feeling unsupported.

These frustrations often build up slowly and it becomes difficult to see when change is necessary.

When Staying with Your Current Provider Might Still Make Sense

Not all issues mean you should move on to a new provider.

You may want to stick with your current provider if

- You are dealing with recent issues and they are being fixed
- You have a good working relationship
- You are limited by your budget from finding an alternate provider
- You already have agreements for improvements

Sometimes a discussion with your current provider can work through your issues.

How to Evaluate Whether a Change is Necessary

The questions you should ask yourself are:

- Are there issues hindering our productivity?
- Do we have faith in the recommendation from our provider?
- Are we sure that we have proper security?
- Are we receiving fair market value?

- Is our organisation surpassing the size of our current support services?

If your answer is no for more than a couple of those items it could be a good time to look for different options.

Steps to Change IT Providers Safely

There is no need to cause disruption when changing an IT provider.

1. Examine Your Existing Contract

Check for:

- Notice periods
- Exit terms

2. Request Documentation

Make sure that you have access to:

- System credentials
- Network diagrams
- Licences

3. Confirm Backups.

Confirm that you have:

- Backups available
- Access to any backups.

4. Plan for the Transition

Discuss with your new provider how to:

- Map your systems.
- Schedule your changes.

5. Work to Minimise Disruption

- Plan to change providers at non-peak times for your business
- Keep employees informed of the changes.

IT Provider Evaluation Checklist

- Quick response
- Proactive monitoring of IT
- Service communication is clear
- Pricing is transparent
- Good security practices

- Strategic advice from providers

Signs You May Need a New IT Provider

- There are frequent problems
- Bad communication
- Security issues
- Little improvement
- Costs are not in a clear way

Safe IT Provider Transition Checklist

- Contracts and agreements reviewed by IT
- Documentation requested - current and historical
- Current backups checked
- Transition plan developed and approved
- Staff notified about the transition to a new vendor.



FAQs

1. When should an organisation assess its IT suppliers?

At least once annually.

2. Is it hard to change IT suppliers?

No, if planned correctly.

3. Will changing suppliers disrupt my business?

Only minimal disruption with good planning.

4. What should I ask a potential IT supplier?

Remember to get answers to the following;

- How fast will they respond?
- What is their approach to security?
- How do they provide support?

5. How long does it take to do a full transition?

Typically a few days a few weeks maximum.

About This Guide

This guide has been produced by the **Computer Support Centre** to assist UK small and medium-sized businesses in determining if their current IT support company is still appropriate for their organisation's needs. As technology becomes an integral part of business processes every day, reliable IT support is vital for keeping productivity high, data safe, and supporting growth within the business.

This guide is designed to assist business owners and managers in identifying potential signals of inadequate IT support, recognise some of the common issues and frustrations that UK small to medium-sized businesses face with their IT support and learn how to properly assess their existing IT service provider. In addition, businesses will be given some practical methods for how to safely transfer from one IT provider to another while continuing to operate the business as well as taking care of sensitive information.

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Conclusion

In summation, selecting the right IT services is critical for every business that relies on technology. Reliable, proactive, and well-managed IT support allows employees to be productive while keeping systems safe.

If multiple instances of the same technical issue arise, or if you are experiencing slow response times, poor communication with your IT provider, or threats to the security of your business, these can be indications that your current IT provider is unable to adequately meet the needs of your organisation. Regularly reviewing the arrangements you have for IT support can provide you with the assurance that the technology you own will be able to effectively support your business operations going forward.

By identifying red flags in the performance of your IT service provider early on, and by deliberately planning for your organisational transition to a new IT service provider, businesses can transition to a new IT service provider with minimal disruption to their operations. In addition, a solid IT partnership will help to resolve any technical issues but will also enable your organisation to enhance the systems you have in place, mitigate potential risks to your organisation and assist with your efforts toward long-term growth.