

IT Support Costs Explained for UK SMEs

Why IT Support Pricing Varies

- The reliance on technology is at an all-time high for small-to-medium sized businesses in the UK, with critical day-to-day operations, like accessing email, cloud computing, laptop use, internet access and more being reliant on technology.
- When something happens to one of these components (i.e. losing a file, e-mail not being received, or becoming vulnerable to cyber security), the impact to an organisation's productivity
- As a result of this increasing dependence on technology, most small and medium businesses will utilise an IT support provider to managing their technology.
- One of the areas that most small and medium businesses experience confusion around is around assessing IT support pricing. When small-to-medium size businesses request quotes from various IT support service providers, the same service will often be quoted differently by each provider at a vastly different price.
- There are many reasons for the disparity in prices for IT support service providers including the size of business, the complexity of the technology it employs, the type of support required and the support pricing model being quoted.
- By gaining an understanding of these factors it will help owners of small and medium businesses make more informed decisions when choosing an IT support provider.

What IT Support Services Typically Include

IT support businesses offer a variety of services designed to assist companies in keeping their technology working correctly as well as securely.

For the majority of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK, usual IT supportive business discover:

Helpdesk Assistance

- When employees need assistance with an IT problem, they turn to the “help desk/technical support center” to deal with issues such as e-mail, software, printer or log-in problems.

Device Management

- IT suppliers monitor employee laptops/desktops and manage those devices, handle updates, troubleshooting, configuration and more.

Software Updates

- Most IT suppliers will provide companies with timely software updates which can be necessary for maintaining the stability and security of computer systems in an office.

Security Monitoring

- Some providers also monitor company's technology to identify any threats, such as viruses or other security breaches.

Backup Management

- Backups are essential for commercially protecting data. If data is lost, whether through accidental deletion, hardware failures or a cyber incident, a backup can assist in restoring it quickly.

Email and Cloud Administration

- Many IT providers are responsible for managing their client's cloud service such as Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace in order to provide full support of their email and/ or cloud-based applications.

Network Support

- Most businesses have made investments in private internal-nets and reliance on the internet; therefore IT suppliers assist in maintaining both of these networks.

Remote Troubleshooting

- As many computer problems can be repaired through remote services it will reduce the time it takes to resolve these types of issues.

On-site Support

- Sometimes, a technical support engineer will need to physically come into the business to resolve a computer issue that cannot be handled remotely.

The amount of services included will depend on the support contract selected.

Main IT Support Pricing Models

Understanding the different pricing models helps businesses compare quotes more effectively.

Break-Fix IT Support

Break-fix services are the model of IT technical support that provides businesses with the ability to only pay for support after an issue has arisen. For example, if your company's server experiences issues, or your team cannot access email, you would contact your IT service provider to have them resolve the problem and pay them for the time required.

Situation

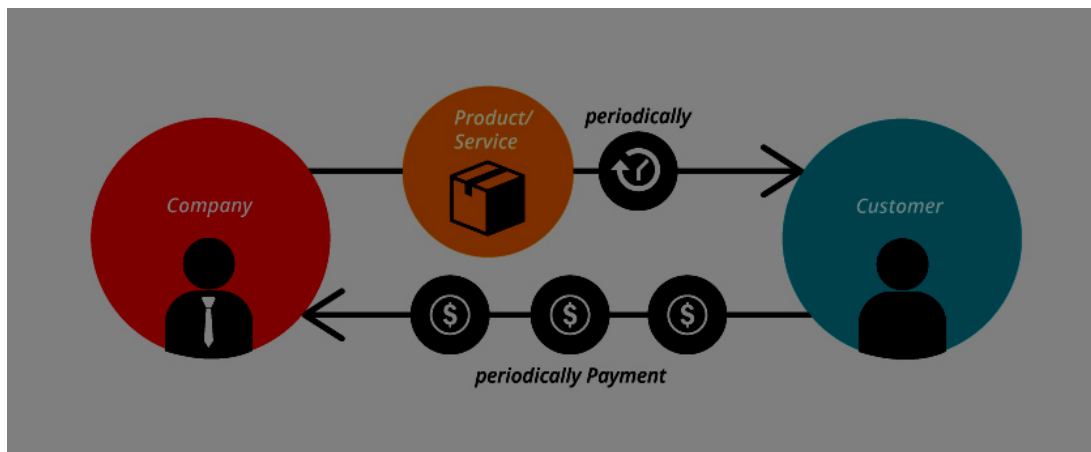
For example, a small company contacts their IT service provider to repair a network issue. The technician will spend three hours identifying and repairing the problem and the company will be responsible for paying for those three hours of support.

Advantages

- No ongoing monthly charge
- This might be beneficial for very small businesses with little need for IT support.

Disadvantages

- Costs can be unpredictable.
- Most issues are only repaired once they happen.
- Limited ability to monitor security on equipment.



Managed IT Support

Managed IT solutions are a common method of providing technical IT services to SMEs.

With managed IT services, businesses pay a monthly fee for ongoing support and management of their IT systems. In most cases, the pricing structure for managed IT support is dependent on:

- The users (per employee)
- The number of devices used (per laptop or desktop computer)

Same Example

Using the above example, a client that has 20 employees would pay a monthly fee for help desk services, monitoring of devices, installing security updates, and maintaining systems.

Advantages

- Predictable monthly costs
- Continuous monitoring
- Proactive maintenance

Disadvantages

- Required to commit monthly.
- Certain services may incur professional charges.

Hourly IT Support

Some providers will provide support through hourly charges.

When a business needs help, it contacts the provider and pays for the time spent.

For example:

A person who manages an office may contact an IT provider to help set up a new printer or resolve software issues.

Retainer-Based IT Support

A retainer model involves contracting a number of support hours for pre-purchase in advance, usually on a monthly basis.

For example, a business may pre-purchase 10 support hours for use as needed during the month.

Whether unused hours will roll over will depend on the terms of the agreement.

Project-Based IT Services

In some situations, IT deliverable items are provided as stand-alone projects rather than continuing support.

Some examples include the following:

- Office networking upgrades
- Email migrations
- Cybersecurity enhancement
- Cloud migration
- Office move

For each of the above projects, the scope and difficulty of the project usually will determine the price that is charged.

Typical IT Support Costs for UK SMEs

Typical Information Technology Support Expenses to UK Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Costs for IT support depend on the business size and complexity. Although companies differ, SMEs typically fit into three categories.

Small (5-10 employees)

Small businesses generally have little IT requirement and should typically use basic IT support services such as Help Desk, e-mail management and hardware and software maintenance

Growing SME (20–50 Employees)

Growing businesses usually require additional IT support services in a formal structure. These services typically include:

- Security Monitoring
- Device Management
- Cloud Management
- Backup Solutions

In addition, at this growth stage it is common for growing SMEs to have monthly support contracts with a contracted IT Provider.

Larger SME (50–100 Employees)

Large SMEs will typically need more structured IT Management. These services can include:

- Delegated IT Account Manager
- Advanced Security Products

- Network Monitoring
- Increased On-Site Support

As their business expands, scalable support systems become essential to expanding entrepreneurs.

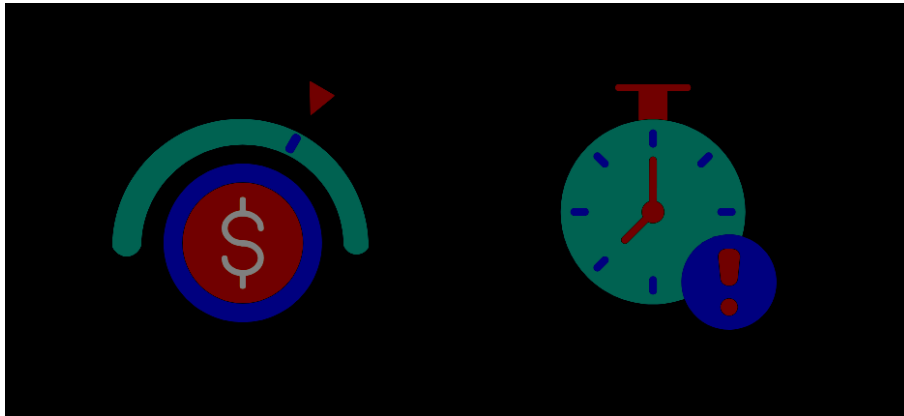
Hidden Costs Businesses Should Watch For

Many IT Support Agreements are subject to other types of charges that might get missed by a business when using that service.

Examples of these charges include:

- After-hours support charges
- On-site visit fees and associated working hours (including travel)
- Licensing software
- Replacement of hardware
- Security upgrades, etc.
- Large-scale project work (not covered by the IT Service Agreement).

Understanding these potential charges can help a business avoid unexpected charges.



Break-Fix vs Managed IT Support Comparison

Break-fix type of support and Managed type of support are two very different types of service.

While the cost may appear to be cheaper when using break-fix support, it can result in unexpected costs and down time when issues arise.

The goal of Managed support is to avoid issues/providing support for hardware and software through ongoing monitoring and maintenance activities.

Businesses that utilize technology on a regular basis can use Managed Support as a means to obtain predictable monthly services and provide reliable service(s) to their customers.

What a Good IT Support Contract Should Include

When creating an IT support agreement it is important that the agreement outline the provided services in detail.

Typical Components of IT Services Agreements:

Identifies Support...

- Scope of Support Services
- Expected Response Times
- Security Responsibility
- Backup Management Responsibility
- Defined Support Hours
- Escalation Procedures
- Transparent Pricing

A well-structured agreement will decrease the number of disagreements and misunderstandings between the customer/business and provider.

IT Support Cost Comparison Checklist

- What Services Are Covered?
- Are Security Tools Part of the Package?
- Does Pricing Scale Up When Adding New Staff?
- Have All Service Hours Been Clearly Defined?

Questions to Ask When Reviewing IT Quotes

- What is included in your monthly fee for the month?
- Will you have any on-site FAQs (in-office) visits?
- How does pricing work on a project basis?
- Are security products being utilized?

FAQs

1. What is the average cost for IT support in the UK?

The price for IT support in the UK can differ based on various factors including the size of your business, the complexity of the technology and how many different levels or types of service are needed. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will have an agreed upon monthly budget to help keep track of expenses.

2. Which type of managed IT support is best for small businesses?

When it comes to deciding which type of managed IT support is best, many businesses appreciate the ability to anticipate and avoid problems as well as having predictable monthly costs.

3. What type of support should be included in your IT support agreement?

Most IT support agreements should represent some form of help desk support, device monitoring, security updates, and a set amount of time for response.

4. Why are quotes for IT support so different from one company to another?

The price of IT support varies by provider because of differences in the type and scope of services offered, security tools being used, amount of response time offered and level and breadth of ongoing support.

5. What can a business do to manage their IT support costs?

Businesses can control the costs associated with IT support by selecting the right type of support, taking proper care of their equipment, and planning for technology upgrades in advance.

About This Guide

Computer Support Centre has published this resource to provide UK small and medium-sized businesses with a clear understanding of how IT support prices work. Many companies depend on technology as part of their day-to-day operations, including e-mail, cloud, data storage, devices used by staff, etc. However, it can sometimes be difficult to comprehend the pricing structure for IT Support in organisations since the terms used are not always uniform or clear.

This document aims to define the key IT Support pricing models, describe the services typically contained within Support Agreements and identify the factors that can drive the cost of providing Support to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by providing examples of "hidden" costs, as well as presenting practical checklists to allow for better comparisons of quotes from multiple service providers.

A better understanding of how IT Support services are priced and what is to be included in an IT Support contract will assist Business Owners and Managers to make the best possible decisions regarding selecting the right IT Provider for their business.

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Conclusion

IT assistance has become an essential element of operating a contemporary company. Small and mid-sized businesses profoundly depend upon technology through their everyday activities; thus, they will need to understand IT support pricing so they can select the right type of service model and easily avoid unanticipated expenses.

There are various pricing models, ranging from break-fix, to managed service, hourly rates, and task based pricing models all of which have their advantages depending upon the size of the company, technological demands, as well as the overall financial position of the business.

Businesses can confirm that they are receiving quality, affordable IT support by thoroughly vetting their support contracts, posing the relevant questions, and contrasting what is offered by competing vendors.

In the end, having a good IT support arrangement helps ensure that business technology continues to function optimally and helps protect sensitive business data, enhance productivity, and support business growth over the long-term.