

—— IT SUPPORT FINDER ——

HOW TO CHOOSE AN IT SUPPORT PARTNER

GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT IT SUPPLIER



WWW.ITSUPPORTFINDER.CO.UK

CHOOSING AN IT PARTNER

Love it or hate it, IT is fundamental to just about every business. And it can be the difference between an average business and a super-charged business with a cherry on the top.

Getting the right IT makes everyone's life easier – things just work! And when things just work people are happy. Staff are happy, customers are happy, suppliers are happy, everyone's happy. And you don't feel like throwing your laptop out the window.

But getting to an IT euphoria doesn't happen by luck. It comes from choosing an IT supplier that is the perfect fit for your business.

In the IT industry an IT supplier or IT support company is called a Managed Service Provider (MSP). Here at IT Support Finder we apply years of knowledge from working with, and for, leading MSPs to help small and medium businesses navigate their way through the IT landscape to choose the right supplier.

One of the main ways we do this is through a free IT Support Finder tool <http://itsupportfinder.co.uk/support-finder-tool/> This helps businesses to search, shortlist and compare IT support providers. But to find the perfect IT partner for your business you need to know what you're looking for. This guide helps you identify the key questions and criteria you need consider to find your perfect partner.

1. IS IT ALL ABOUT LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION?

Traditionally most businesses would look for an IT support company that was based just down the road from them. That's because they had onsite servers and PCs that needed an onsite engineer to fix things if they went wrong. And being close by meant quick and cheap travel for IT support.

However, things have changed. A combination of cloud services, remote support (they access your computer over the internet) and automated updates; all mean that onsite support is very rarely, if ever, needed.

That doesn't mean you need to ditch the local IT provider for a big national company. After all it is great for small and medium businesses to support each other. It simply means you can cast your net a bit wider to find the right supplier for you. For example if you have a Citrix environment or a particular application your business uses and the MSPs in your town don't have real expertise in those areas then there is really no reason why you shouldn't work with an expert in the areas you need even if they are in neighbouring cities or counties.

2. DOES YOUR BUSINESS EVER SLEEP?

Do you need 24/7 support. Don't pay a premium if you don't.

One of the easiest ways to optimise your support costs and make sure they meet your needs is to right-size the support. If you run an ecommerce business or a local taxi company then you probably need to have quick, 24 hour support because if your systems go down in the evening then you risk losing revenue and reputation. You can select this in the IT Support Finder tool to make sure you only match with suppliers that provide this service.

However, if you are a 9-5 business that can wait until the morning to get your issue resolved then you can save thousands of pounds a year by not paying for a premium service you don't really need. You can still work with a supplier that offers 24/7 support and just opt for a non 24-hour support plan; however it means you have a much wider pool of suppliers you can work with and you may find one that is more tailored or cost-effective for your needs.

3. IS YOUR FRIEND TRYING TO SABOTAGE YOUR BUSINESS?

Well probably not, but if you are relying on recommendations from friends for an IT support provider then it might be doing more harm than good.

An IT support company is not a one size fits all. So, what is right for a friend or LinkedIn connection might not be right for you. By all means look for references and reviews when considering an IT supplier, but do that only once you have the shortlist of suppliers that are right for you.

Look at your IT needs (we've got an assessment sheet to help you) – the technologies you have, the types of employees you have, the importance of your different information and systems. Then look for suppliers that best match your requirements.

Here's an example of why recommendations aren't always the right way to go:

Your friend has a small accountancy firm and you have a small consultancy firm pretty similar on the face of it.

However, they use a commercial cloud based accountancy software and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Therefore all the updates, data back-up and system support is done by the companies they buy the software from – let's say Sage and Salesforce. Other than that they just use Microsoft Office on their computers which are supported by a local IT support company.

On the other hand your business is a small construction consultancy firm. All your computers are Apple Macs so first of all the company your friend uses doesn't support those. Secondly you have large amounts of sensitive data (site pictures and plans) that you capture remotely on mobile devices. It needs to be secure and backed-up so you need someone with expertise in mobile device security as well as cloud hosting and back-up.

Whilst the company the friend uses are great at fixing PCs and very responsive and reasonably priced they don't have the expertise that are right for you.

4. JACK OF ALL TRADES MASTER OF NONE?

Think about the key technologies in your business. You need a supplier that is an expert in these. List out the technologies your businesses uses and rank them in order of importance. If they stopped working would you lose money instantly? Would customers be affected? Would staff be able to do their jobs?

Consider how common the technology is. If a laptop breaks you should expect all MSPs to be able to quickly fix or replace it. If you have a specific application or an ecommerce platform you will want to consider looking for specific expertise from a partner.

Do the same with data.

Do you have specific compliance you need to adhere to such as Payment Card Industry (PCI), government data, data of vulnerable people?

Do you have data that your business relies on and needs it back-up as quickly as possible?

Is your data already backed up by third party suppliers, such as a cloud based Customer Relationship Management software; or is backing it up your responsibility?

Once you have a clear view of your technology and data requirements you can filter for suppliers that have expertise in those areas to make sure they are the right fit for you.

5. DON'T BE A GUINEA PIG

Look for suppliers that have worked with companies like you. Sector and size. Ask for references – or better still look for suppliers that are IT Support Finder verified where we have spoken to customers of a provider and verified they are happy with the service they receive.

This is really about capturing your requirements from the steps above and then making sure you know you are looking at partners that fit the bill. You don't want to find out you were their first customer with your technology when the system goes down and they don't know why!

An easy way to do this is look at their accreditations. If security is important for you or your auditor look for those with ISO accreditations or as a minimum Cyber Essentials. And when it comes to the technologies you identify in the exercise in section 4, every vendor will offer certifications and accreditations. If the partner knows their stuff they will have at least two out of three of these.

So, there you have it – your complete guide to finding the perfect IT support provider for your business. Now use this to apply the filters on our IT Support Finder tool to find your perfect match.

And if you're still not sure then get in touch and one of our consultants will happily walk you through the process and discuss how we can help. Email contact@itsupportfinder.co.uk

ABOUT US

IT Support Finder was born out of the desire to provide real choice to IT support customers.

We provide a platform for customers to find and compare IT support companies.

How we help you choose an IT Support Company?

We provide independent advice, tools and guidance to help you choose the right IT support company for your business. No bias, ulterior motives or gimmicks just professional advice to help you make the best decision for your business.

We remove complexity through simple tools to research, shortlist and engage IT support companies that are right for you.

Who we are

The team at IT Support Finder are experts in Managed Service Providers, which is the industry term for IT Support Companies. The IT Support Finder team applies 20 years' of knowledge from working with, and for, leading MSPs to help small and medium businesses navigate their way through the IT landscape to choose the right supplier. One of the main ways we do this is through a free IT Support Finder tool.

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