

Computer One offers an IT Support Desk, Infrastructure Management, WAN Management (your connection to the world), Network Security, Back-ups, Voice and Video Communication, vCIO (strategy) all under the banner of Managed Services.

But how do you know we're any good? In fact, how do you go about assessing any Managed Services Provider's offer to make the right choice for your organisation?

Once you sign-up with a new managed service provider (MSP), you're going to be interconnected for a number of years and extricating your organisation from a bad relationship can take precious time and lots of money.

To make the right choice, we recommend working through the following discussion points. We've divided the list into high, medium and low importance categories, based on the discussion point's impact on the success of the relationship.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss any item with you, to help you make the right choice.

James Walker

Jemes Walken

# **High Importance**

# Do they ask about your business and how it works, and do they use that information to talk about a solution customised for your organisation?

Most IT consultants will, at some point early on in the discussion, ask about your business. But fewer will take that information and turn it into the foundation for an IT Service mix that perfectly fits your organisation. Fewer still will draw diagrams of the proposed solution and show you how it integrates with and supports your organisation's goals.

If the balance of the conversation is more about what they can offer rather than what you have said, it's a sign they're not listening from the outset. You're unlikely to achieve a successful relationship.

# Do they propose a small first engagement?

Forming a new managed services relationship is a two-way street and the service provider has to want your organisation as a client as much as you want them as a provider.

The best way to understand your support needs and form a good working relationship is with a small project that allows each entity to observe and work with representatives of the other.

We will often recommend a security audit, a cloud readiness assessment, an IT roadmapping project or some other small engagement in the first instance, so that both entities can come to understand the other's requirements and service preferences.

#### Who trusts them?

Do they offer testimonials featuring real names and real companies? Do they encourage you to talk to other clients?

We include descriptions of real clients and the names of their key decision-makers in every proposal. Our clients are happy to tell others about their experiences.

It's also worth mentioning that we are the company that international brand names in IT turn to when they need a local resource on the ground in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

### Do they outsource their support desk to a non-Australian destination?

The subtle skills of communication go hand in hand with the experience of receiving IT Support. There's no doubt that Australianbased engineers understand the language better and that means a faster resolution to support tickets. By contrast, a support desk outsourced to a non-Australian destination often means it's harder to communicate by phone or email and those providing support may only be able to operate within the scripted parameters.

All our staff members are located in Australia. When we take on a new client, all our engineers are "inducted" into that client's IT environment. They are shown the discoveries made during the on-boarding process, they are introduced to the knowledge base that we have established and will grow every day and they are introduced to the key contacts in the firm, including the VIP's.

You also get your own dedicated engineer whose job it is to know your network better than anyone else and to record and share that knowledge.

It's a fair bet that a support desk staffed in a foreign country is full of minimum-wage workers, where turnover is high and no longterm system familiarity grows. The lack of familiarity means that the average time to close a support ticket will remain higher than it should be, probably for the term of the contract.

Our team is trained to resolve your staff's issues on first contact and 91% of tickets are resolved at the first level of contact.

# Are they break-fix focused, or do they proactively address system issues?

You need to know that you're about to form a relationship with a provider that actively seeks to spend less time fixing your network and responding to requests for help, and more time developing its resilience. The ultimate goal (and we haven't achieved it yet but we have come close) is to not raise a single ticket with your provider for the month, because your network "iust works".

To assess this attribute, ask for examples of where a provider has analysed support tickets and proactively remediated recurring issues. The trick is to ask for more than the standard two examples - this will tell you how deeply the level of proactivity runs.

## Do they clearly de-risk the solution and take the time to explain it?

IT services can be de-risked in a number of ways. Identifying the risks is the first step.

For example, is there a geographic risk to hosting or business continuity? How about a knowledge risk residing in a single person's head? What about information security risks; how are they going to be mitigated in the solution?





A good provider will be able to identify the risks in your particular network configuration and demonstrate how they're going to address them as part of their proposal.

# Do they invite you to visit their premises?

Many MSP's put up a good public face but won't let you see behind the scenes because they work their support team out of cramped conditions that encourage high staff turnover.

We invite you to visit the support desk and engineering centre in our head office at 488 Queen Street, Brisbane, any time by prior arrangement.

# Can they get to your premises quickly if required?

When an emergency strikes, you need to know that your service provider's A-Team is going to respond within a guaranteed timeframe and arrive at your office ready to help.

We have many stories of our network monitoring software identifying an issue at a very late hour, alerting our on-call staff who then arrange to meet nominated business contacts at their offices to remedy an issue before the staff arrive the next day.

Likewise, during business hours, we maintain a team which can report to your premises quickly and work in parallel with engineers in our offices to locate the cause of an issue, bypass it so that your staff can get back to work and then fully resolve it.

### What does their posture on security look like?

No system is immune from a breach. Even the most highly guarded networks in the world have been breached. But by the same token, every good MSP works to provide consistent vulnerability management of the hardware and software in the network and offers education to its own staff and those of its clients to lock down the weakest attack vector - the human factor.

Ask the prospective provider to tell you about their security processes and the standard of delivery that they guarantee. What form does their education take? How often are patches managed? How are patches tested to ensure they don't break your Standard Operating Environment before being released? Can they offer Application Whitelisting (and if you don't know what that is, how well do they explain it to you?). Can they offer extra security testing? Are they willing to have your environment tested by an external party while under their control?

### Can they integrate with on-site staff?

Most MSP's are a fully outsourced IT team. They replace the need for an on-site IT staff.

Computer One can be the same thing. But if it's important to you to have an alwaysavailable on-site resource there are two options. We can provide a permanent team member(s) on-site or we can integrate with your staff to complement their services.

The first option is a good one, because we will rotate our staff through your business and spread the firsthand knowledge of your network. You won't ever suffer a knowledge loss when a key staff member changes employment. It's another example of de-risking the solution.

The second option is quite popular because our IT team complements your own. We integrate our support desk software with your on-site team and then Computer One triages all requests for assistance. That frees up your on-site resource(s) to deliver more value to your users rather than deal with administration and other distracting items that can be solved remotely like password updates and printer resets.





# **Medium Importance**

### Do they challenge you?

If you're not being challenged by your potential service provider, it's possible they're not experienced enough to ask tough questions.

We often find ourselves respectfully challenging the assumptions of our potential clients in order to drill down to the essential items they need from a managed service provider, rather than their assumed needs.

This has the dual effect of tightening the specification of the correct solution for your organisation to make it easier for you to make a decision and simultaneously reducing the cost.

# Do they have the right relationships (and are they accredited or just resellers)?

A good MSP will know when to involve a skilled third party in the solution. Furthermore, a good MSP will be an accredited partner of third party products and services, to know how to specify them precisely and work alongside the external contractor as an extension of your business.

Computer One is an accredited reseller or partner of many leading brands in the IT space. We formally evaluate new third party service offerings every month, choosing the best companies to partner with or recommend to our clients.

# What does a monthly report looks like and what goes on in the meeting?

Keeping your network running smoothly and being available to respond to urgent matters are the bread-and-butter output in a managed services contract. What separates one provider from another is the way in which they proactively manage the performance of your IT.

The monthly reporting meeting is a forum for discussion of the past month's tickets and general performance, and also an important planning opportunity. Done right, monthly reporting isn't just a compliance item communication goes both ways and it's an opportunity for savings and production efficiency improvements.

Ask for an example report and a description of the monthly process. Look for references to root cause analysis and remedial action, recommendations, and new technology that will benefit your business - that's what a good provider will talk about.

# Do they have direct industry knowledge?

Many clients think that their industry is unlike any other. And while aspects of that statement may be true, the IT function is, by and large, the same in every organisation.

The challenges of user management, information security, wide area network management and many other aspects of IT are identical between even the most disparate businesses. In fact, only certain specialpurpose productivity software can make one business different from another and give one MSP an advantage over others.

Luckily Computer One has experience in the software found in Retail, Professional Services (legal, accountancy, finance and insurance), Healthcare, Manufacturing, Wholesaling, Mining and a raft of other industries. We have seen and conquered practically every challenge in IT.

#### How broad is their skillset?

Can the MSP deliver a range of complementary services like Security Penetration Tests, IT Roadmapping (also known as Virtual CIO services), Independent Project Management, Vendor Management, Business Intelligence reporting, Software Development and more? Or are they really good at being an outsourced support desk only?

Go beyond the basic questions about certifications and headcount. Ask about scalability and availability of staff with specialized skill sets, how specialists are organised and share knowledge, and how best practices are communicated through the team. Ask for specific examples to get to know the true capabilities of the team you're talking to.

# Do they offer a service guarantee and a trial period?

A good MSP will provide a guarantee over service quality and not seek to lock you in to a long-term contract with heavy penalties for early exit.

Computer One offers a 3-month trial period on every new engagement where there are no exit fees or extended notice period applied. That way you can be sure that you're not trapped in an unsuitable arrangement. We believe that you will stay because of the service, not the contract clauses.

I'd describe Computer One as thorough, competent and collaborative.

They provide a fantastic end-to-end support service. One of their best features is how professional and courteous they are regardless of our end users' skills or how often Computer One needs to speak to them to resolve an issue.

They're always diligent at finding out the root cause of a matter, not just providing a quick fix.

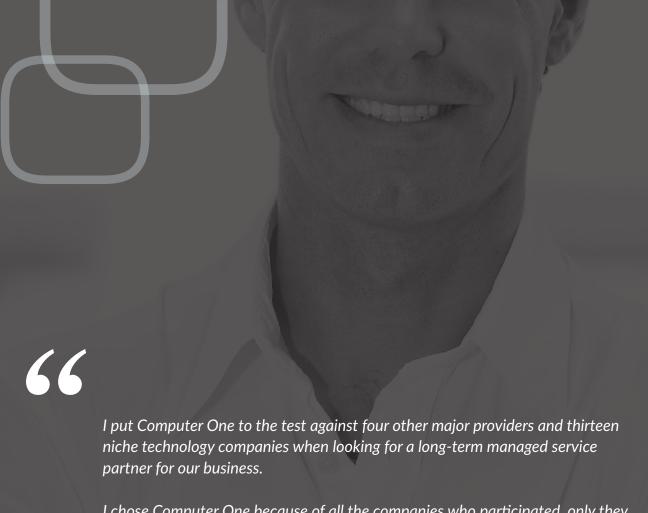
They're also completely transparent. When they make a mistake they acknowledge it and resolve it so it doesn't happen again.

It was important to us to find an Australian-based support team that could fit with and complement our internal IT team, then scale with us over time. We found that in Computer One.

I'm looking forward to continuing our relationship and I encourage you to consider them as well.

Sean Ellaby

Group Head of IT Operations Specialty Fashion Group



I chose Computer One because of all the companies who participated, only they gave us the level of redundancy and resilience I was after. Their solution was the most technically robust of all the vendors and only they picked-up all our requirements. They were also very price competitive.

Since their re-appointment Computer One has completed a major migration project, consolidated 8 separate phone system providers into one which has halved our phone bill and continued to manage a helpdesk which allows me to be much more strategic in my work. I am very, very happy with their service.

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**Nathanael Harris** 

IT Project Manager SV Partners

# **Low Importance**

#### **Price**

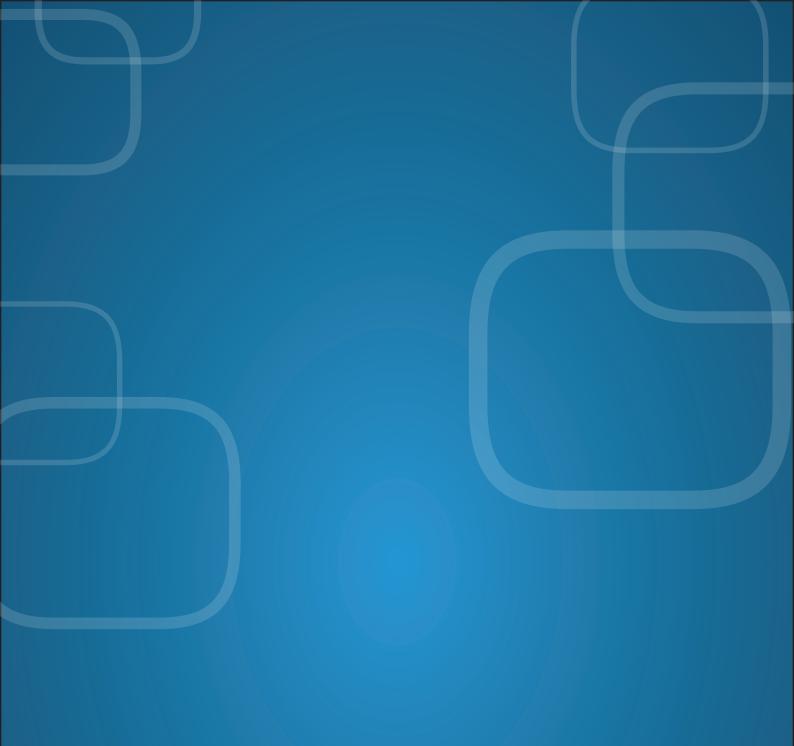
"Ha!" you say. "Nice try". But it's true.

It might seem self-serving for us to write this, but the fact is that if you concentrate on the High and Medium Importance items and the proposal is matched to what your organisation needs (as opposed to a gold-plated solution that is over-specified), the price will cease to be an obstacle, no matter who the provider is.

We test the market every year to measure our pricing and we're consistently in the 70th percentile. We are never the lowest price but rarely the highest for any mix of services.

So we know that when you work with us to arrive at the correct specification of services for your business, the price will seem reasonable compared to the outcome you're going to receive. In the end, it will be a low priority item.

We look forward to our next opportunity to discuss these items with you. Please feel free to test us on any one of them - it's the best way to find the right provider for your organisation.



Phone: 1300 667 871

**Brisbane Office:** 

Level 5, 488 Queen Street Brisbane, QLD 4000

**Sydney Office:** 

Level 21, 133 Castlereagh Street Sydney, NSW 2000

Melbourne Office:

Level 28, 303 Collins Street Melbourne, VIC 3000

Email: sales@computerone.com.au

