Managed IT Services. Benefits and Considerations.

Managed IT services offer a wide range of remote Hybrid IT , with responsibilities ranging from specific on-demand response to 24/7/365 coverage of IT duties. Organizations can leverage managed IT to reduce in-house IT workload or fill gaps left by existing IT roles and skills. These services are provided for on-premises IT, as well as for private cloud storage.

Managed service providers can reduce in-house overhead, increase IT efficiency, and improve uptime management. However, to ensure compliance with national and international regulatory entities, organizations should ensure that potential MSPs properly enforce data protection and privacy standards.

What Are Managed IT Services?

Managed IT services enable organizations to outsource IT tasks to a vendor as contracted or subscription services. These services can be used to lighten the workload of in-house teams, supplement teams that are unable to meet IT demand, or to replace in-house teams. Managed service providers (MSPs) can be useful for ensuring 24/7/365 coverage of IT duties and can contribute specialty knowledge or expertise that may not otherwise be available.

What services are most commonly used?

Managed IT services can encompass many responsibilities but typically include:

- Remote monitoring and management of hardware and infrastructure.
- Security services, including monitoring, penetration testing, threat hunting, or incident response.
- Configuration, monitoring, and management of cloud services. These can be rendered in cooperation with or outside of managed cloud services.
- Communications support, including IP telephony services.

Managed IT Service Benefits

There are numerous benefits that organizations can gain from the right managed IT service provider. These benefits often include:

Contractual terms

Managed services enable you to set contractual terms for IT tasks that include service level agreements (SLAs). This means you don't have to spend time recruiting, hiring, or training IT staff. This enables you to pay only for the coverage or services you need and avoids the associated costs that come with maintaining full-time employees.

Efficiency

Outsourcing IT tasks to managed services can free your teams to focus on revenue-generating tasks. These providers can also often provide guidance or recommendations to help you optimize the performance of your infrastructure. This can lead to increases in productivity and improved ROI.

Better management of uptime

Managed IT service providers are not tied to the same schedule as your other employees. This means providers are often able to perform system updates and maintenance during off-hours. When MSPs have flexible schedules to work around your own, you see greater uptime and fewer workflow disruptions.

Considerations for Managed IT Services Providers

While managed service providers can offer many benefits, there are also some considerations you should be aware of when working with them:

- **Holding providers accountable**—when choosing a provider you should make sure they have clearly defined and actionable SLAs. Contracting your IT tasks is to a provider that you cannot hold accountable results in frustration and losses. This accountability should include clear reporting of services rendered and system performance. If a provider is unwilling to provide metrics or share system data with you, they should be avoided.

- **Getting strategic IT planning**—managed IT providers should help you strategically plan infrastructure upgrades, configuration changes, and additions. If they don't, you won't be able to derive full value from managed services. This means providers need to not only understand your current infrastructure but make efforts to manage it with respect to your business goals and objectives. Planning should extend beyond the immediate future into the next year or two.

- **Finding a provider with a good track record**—not all providers are created equally. When considering a provider, you need to verify their track record with other organizations in your industry and scale. Reliable MSPs should let you know which comparable organizations they are working with. They can also often help set up opportunities to talk with someone from that company. If a provider is not willing to share proof of value, they are a poor choice of investment.

Steps to Effective Decision Making About IT MSP

When selecting an IT MSP, there are several steps you can take to ensure that the one you choose fits your needs. Although these steps require some extra effort, careful assessment of your needs, assets, and goals helps ensure that you get the most from any provider you select.

Assess current IT systems

Taking a thorough assessment of your current IT needs and costs is the first step to finding an MSP. You need to understand what infrastructure and workflows you need managed, what resources you currently have, and what your budget is for management. During this assessment, you should also pay attention to what your business goals are.

For example, if you want supplemental support for an existing IT team, the providers you should consider are different than if you want a self-contained team. Additionally, consider whether

managed services make sense in the long run. While it may be cheaper at first to contract out IT management and maintenance, as your organization grows it may make more sense to invest in acquiring and training an in-house team.

Request an audit of your current systems

Once you've narrowed down a list of providers, you may want them to perform an audit of your systems. This can help you determine if they have the support and experience needed to manage your assets.

You want to make sure that providers are competent with any specialized hardware or software you are using or intend to use in the future. You should also ensure that they are familiar with any industry or compliance standards that apply to your systems and data. If providers struggle to properly audit your systems it is unlikely that they will be able to support systems effectively.

Consider scalability and flexibility

When assessing potential vendors, pay attention to the capacity of the services they can supply. Providers should be able to scale with you and ideally should have more bandwidth, service hours, and expertise than you need. If they do not, then your provider might become the bottleneck reducing your capacity and performance.

This is particularly important if you are planning big infrastructure changes in the near future. For example, cloud migration. You need to identify a provider that can support any growth your organization goes through without sacrificing performance or coverage.

How Cloudian Helps Improve Managed IT Services

MSPs are often required to deliver affordable, scalable capacity availability. In addition to meeting these requirements, MSPs need to provide seamless integration without wasting too many resources on support. To help MSPs meet these demands, Cloudian provides two types of services:

- **Storage as a Service**—Cloudian offers scalable storage solutions, including simple management, built-in data protection, and interoperable S3-API compatibility. Cloudian supports multi-tenancy with native QoS and billing, as well as white label user interfaces.
-
- **Backup and Archive as a Service**—Cloudian HyperStore is an object storage solution you can use as a backup target. You can deploy HyperStore nodes in any location that requires capacity storage, and then scale as needed. Cloudian provides data protection and erasure coding options, which are configurable for up to 14 nines data durability.