

The SMB Business



IT Services Buyer's Guide

Tailored Technology Support

CHAPTER 1

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING IN OUR BUSINESSES



What an extraordinary few years it's been for technology and business.

Back at the start of the pandemic, we had no idea just how long-term its impact would be, did we?

Because what was initially just a rush to work from home, accelerated the development of something which is probably here to stay forever...

Hybrid working.

That means being able to work in the office or in your home. Or anywhere.

Increasingly employees are demanding this flexibility. Which means a change in how businesses handle their information.

Data's becoming more transient. It's easier to access it on any device, from wherever you are. While this has endless positives, it also means that data security is more important than ever.

Over the past few years, we've witnessed a terrifying rise in ransomware. We explain this in more detail later in the guide. But for now, know that you absolutely want to avoid it.

Meantime, devices are getting smarter and smarter and software's becoming more intelligent. We only need to look at the way we use our phones today compared to just 5 years ago to see this.

Most businesses have seen their technology needs develop fast. These needs are still accelerating – and will continue to do so throughout this year and next.

It's important that you have a technology strategy to drive this, rather than just a policy of reacting to needs as they arise.



Let's talk about the two technology areas we believe you should focus on. They are **Defend** and **Invest**.



- **Defend** is about protecting your business from cyber criminals. The amount of cyber-crime is constantly increasing, to levels never seen before. It's really scary.
- **Invest** is about making sure technology is powering your business forward, not holding it back.

As all this evolves, more business functions become totally reliant on good IT. And great security-focussed IT support.

We have written this guide to help you understand how a trusted IT partner behaves, and what great IT support looks like.

We will explain why we genuinely partner with our clients and refuse to become just another supplier. We will also explain why it's critical you put your IT strategy and data security at the very core of your long-term business planning.



CHAPTER 2

YOU'VE GOT A BUSINESS PLAN.
DO YOU HAVE AN IT STRATEGY?



When did you last update your IT strategy?

Hopefully it's something you've made changes to over the past 12 months, to take Covid into account.

If you don't have one, or if you haven't given it much thought over the last few years, now is definitely the time to get on with it.

If you use any technology in your business – whether that's something as simple as a cash register, or it's a full blown network for 5 locations – a proper IT strategy will be your best friend. It's the foundation to growing your business. It can mean the difference between surviving a time of uncertainty and thriving through it.

There's a big chance we're biased! But we cannot stress enough how important a well-thought-out IT strategy is for any successful business.

Your IT strategy should work alongside your business plan, detailing the ways your technology will accelerate progress towards your goals and objectives. It should take into account both long and short term targets, and leave room for change where necessary (if nothing else, the pandemic has taught us just how quickly we might need to adapt).

And while it's called an IT strategy, it's not actually about your technology. Sure, you'll have plans for the technology and devices that you use, and those that you aspire to use in the future. In reality, the strategy is about your business, and how your technology can help you to achieve all the things you'd like to, in the easiest way possible.

A great starting point is to take a look at your current IT infrastructure. What works well, and what would you like to improve? As your business grows, will your technology grow with you, or will you need to look at new software, networks, and even phone systems?

Speak to the people working in your business. What do they think works really well, and what would they change if they could? Are there parts of your infrastructure that actually hinder what you're doing? Could you save time if you switched over to different software, or if one app could communicate with another one?



When you're working with an IT partner, they will be able to help you identify the right hardware and software. They will make recommendations based on the way you work, and the ways you want to work. They should even be able to spot potential issues that you hadn't noticed, and suggest a simpler way of doing things.

A technology roadmap as part of your strategy will help you to budget better, and know what's going to be new, and when. It'll stop those surprise costs and random invoices you didn't budget for.

It can seem a little complicated to do this yourself. But if you're working with an IT partner, this is definitely something they should be getting involved in too.

Now, more than ever, every spend needs to be justified. Every investment needs to work hard for your business. You want value for money from everything you do.

Create a range of metrics to help you track how well your infrastructure is actually working for you. It's nice that your team like the way a certain system works. But if you're not getting a return on your investment then it's not working as well as you might think.

Your IT partner should also get involved with regular strategic reviews. It's up to you how often you do these, but we would recommend at least every 6 months you should look at what's going well and what's taking longer than you'd like it to. A few adjustments may be all it needs to get you back on track towards hitting your goals.

And this is why we keep talking about an IT partner. Not an IT company. Not an IT provider. **A partner.**

Imagine an office building. It has a cleaner who comes in every evening and cleans up the mess that people make.

That's how lots of IT companies work. They just clean up the mess.

We actually prefer to work as a facilities manager. You see, a facilities manager is constantly thinking and planning. They schedule what maintenance the building needs. They look at what they can proactively do to stop the building falling into any level of disrepair.

Yes, there's still an element of managing the cleaners and making sure they've done their job. But they're proactive enough to stop most of the problems happening in the first place.

That's what an IT partner does. We take a proactive approach. We do as much as we can in the background to stop things from going wrong in the first place.

Of course, things will still go wrong. Unfortunately, that's inevitable when it comes to fast moving technology and data. But that's when the clean-up work happens and things get fixed. All of that proactive work means that we need to clean up a lot less than an IT company that doesn't work proactively.



What our Team likes to do for our clients is to create ongoing fluid technology roadmaps. It means that both of us know:

- Exactly what will be happening over the next 2 to 3 years
- Exactly what technological investments you need to make
- And there are no surprises. It's all planned and regular strategic reviews help us all to move in the right direction

Our roadmap also allows us to see what can be delayed (if there's a problem); what investments are critical; and similarly, if you're ahead of things financially, what can be brought forward.

In a large part, it's our partnership that allows this in-depth planning to take place. We get to know your business as if it's our own. We're constantly working with you on your business and learning more about you and your team.

This commitment makes it so easy for us to help you because we know (just as well as you do) where the business is going.



CHAPTER 3

WHY BUSINESS OWNERS & MANAGERS SWITCH IT PARTNERS



You probably won't be surprised to learn that we hear from a lot of businesses who are unhappy with their current IT provider.



These are the top 10 reasons people want to make the switch to a new and improved IT partner:



REASON TO SWITCH 1) YOU'RE NOT SEEING BUSINESS RESULTS

Return on investment is everything. Especially right now. You need to be able to see at a glance exactly how hard your IT partner is working for you. And what benefit that work is bringing to your business.

An IT partner should not only provide a detailed IT strategy for the long and short term. They should also give you a set of metrics which you can measure results by.

And these metrics should be relevant and important to your business. Not convoluted with jargon. We have heard too many stories of IT companies providing very vague metrics that are impossible to decipher. Avoid!



REASON TO SWITCH 2) POOR COMMUNICATION

This can cover a whole range of issues... from it taking far too long for them to acknowledge problems... to them not letting you know when updates are taking place... or not getting back to you when they say they will...

If we were talking about any other kind of supplier, these gripes might seem a little petty. But as we know, without working technology, business can't run as it's supposed to. And these little gripes become huge issues.

Again, this is another way for you to distinguish an IT provider from an IT partner.

You need a responsive IT partner who:

- Acknowledges issues in good time
- Keeps you in the loop of everything that you need to know, and
- Does what they say they'll do, when they say they'll do it

Just as your success is their success, your failure is their failure. So the faster an issue can be resolved, the better it is for both parties.





REASON TO SWITCH 3) THEY DON'T TAKE DATA SECURITY SERIOUSLY

There are some IT providers – whose job it is to keep your data safe and secure – that don't do the same thing within their own business.

They don't make it a priority to keep themselves educated on the latest scams and threats. So they can't keep you up to speed.

And they won't go out of their way to ensure every last part of your data is as safe as it can be. Or that your software 100% up-to-date all the time.

Is this really a company you'd want to be responsible for keeping your business safe from the growing number of data breaches?



REASON TO SWITCH 4) THINGS TAKE TOO LONG TO FIX

Understandably, many problems can't always be fixed immediately. Some issues take a while to get to the bottom of. Other problems are rare and may take a little more diagnostic work.

But in these situations, good communication is key.

It might take you a while to see a resolution, but if your IT partner is keeping you updated at each step, you're confident it's in hand.

Whereas if your support request is still awaiting a response three days later... you've got a problem.

And would you believe that some issues never get fixed at all? Or that one thing gets fixed only to break something else?

This is technology we're talking about. It goes wrong. It doesn't always work the way we want it to. But you absolutely should not be facing issue after issue, and waiting days to have problems resolved. You should not face silence when you need help.

All that waiting means downtime for your business. Where's the value for money in that?





REASON TO SWITCH 5) THEY NEVER ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

When you take on an IT partner, it's vital that both businesses take responsibility for their side of the agreement.

Failing to do so causes a huge lack of trust. And means that the relationship is going nowhere.

We've heard from business owners who have reported an issue to their IT provider, only to be told that it's their fault that the issue arose!

(despite them following advice and instruction from that same IT provider)

We have also heard from businesses who have reported issues to their IT provider; only to be told that they need to contact someone else (such as a software supplier) about the problem.

The idea of an IT partner is that you trust them to deal with their area of expertise, while you get on with yours. If they're passing the buck when you face a problem, you're not getting the benefit of a support partner at all.



REASON TO SWITCH 6) THEY CONFUSE YOU WITH TECH TALK

If technology wasn't complicated, everyone would be able to take care of their own business infrastructure without a problem.

However, the truth is quite the opposite. It's full of strange words and concepts, and everything changes every 7 minutes! (it seems that way anyway).

It's a minefield if you don't know what you're doing.

The hallmark of a good IT partner is that they take this complication and make it look easy. Better still, they make it sound easy. They explain things to you without sounding like they're speaking a foreign language.

Again, it all comes down your connection as partners. If you can't communicate properly with each other, how fruitful is this relationship really going to be? The likelihood is that it'll leave both sides frustrated, and your business won't be able to make the most of the technology it has.





REASON TO SWITCH 7) THEY'RE ALWAYS PUSHING NEW HARDWARE

Many of our clients complain that their previous IT providers spent more time pushing new equipment than they did on the fundamentals.

It's nice to have the very latest technology in your business, but it's certainly not vital. There are lots of other things to consider before upgrading equipment and devices. Especially today when value for money and return on investment are critical.

Of course, your business will need a certain level of equipment for you to operate the way you need to, but you probably already have most of the things you need. I find that for most businesses, it's far more important to get the infrastructure right before we even consider your hardware. Additional devices, for example, are sometimes nice to have rather than crucial.

A good IT partner will help you to create an IT roadmap, which should detail at which points in the years ahead you need to budget for upgrades or additional devices.



REASON TO SWITCH 8) YOU'VE OUTGROWN THEM

Now, this last one isn't necessarily a bad reason to switch IT partners. Sometimes, your business simply grows too big for a smaller IT company to deal with.

That's actually great news for you. The difficult part can be knowing when to make the switch. Especially when you're working with a company that you like.

It's worth keeping in mind that if:

- Your support requests aren't being responded to as quickly as you need them to be
- Or the recommendations on how best to use technology to grow your business have stopped
- Or you need a higher level of support

...it's in your best interest to find a new IT partner.



If you've noticed you need more support, your IT partner has probably noticed too. In fact, if they're good partners, they may even discuss this with you first. Trust us when we say there will be no hard feelings. No company wants to be out of its depth with clients.

If you've ever felt any of these gripes, perhaps now is the right time for you to make the switch too?

When you place your technology at the heart of your business growth strategy, you see why it's important to have a partner you can trust.

No business is perfect. Inevitably we get some things wrong for our clients some of the time, because we're human too.

But because we have partnerships with our clients, we're able to have honest conversations and change course quickly. We don't have to spend unnecessary time repairing relationships; rather we can set the correct expectations and resolve issues quickly.



CHAPTER 4

PROTECT THE MOST IMPORTANT
THING IN YOUR BUSINESS



As we've seen over the past few years, being able to work anywhere, any time, on any device is great.



We've been shifting to this way of working over the last 10 years, but the pandemic really increased the speed of change.

This is the way many of us are working today, and that's how it's going to stay in the future, whether we're in a pandemic or not. Working flexibly like this means that businesses can reduce their costs; attract the best candidates for jobs; and have a happier workforce too.

But as our devices get smarter and more powerful, they're also becoming more disposable. As you'll know, you can do most things on your smartphone now. And how often do we lose or break them?

The thing is, because everything is stored safely in the cloud (that's the huge servers where you store your data, in multiple locations across the globe), if you lose your phone, it's no big deal. You simply get a new one and restore your files from your backup. Just like magic, you have a new handset that contains all the data your old one had.

A lost phone is now merely a minor inconvenience and a small financial cost. And it's not just phones this applies to. Your tablet and laptop work the same way.

This flexibility is amazing. However, it also has its risks. Number one being that any time you take your device away from the office, you're potentially opening up your data to anybody. The sad and scary truth is that there are countless gangs of cyber-criminals who are trying very, very hard to access your data. And even take it away from you.

You've probably heard about malware before. Malware, or malicious software, is code placed on a device or network with the aim of infecting, stealing, or corrupting your data. Essentially, a hacker can create malware to do exactly what they want, once it's within your network. It's a pain, because once it's there, it can take you a while to notice what's happened. And it can be tricky to remove.



But there's something scarier: Ransomware. This is actually the fastest growing cybercrime right now. And if you're not taking all the right precautions it's likely that you will fall victim to this devastating form of cyber-attack at some point.

As the name suggests, ransomware is a kind of malicious software that encrypts your data so you can't access it. The hackers then literally hold you to ransom to regain access – you must pay a fee.

For example, they might ask for \$5,000 – in Bitcoin, of course – within 3 days. If you fail to pay, this fee doubles. If a week goes by, you can kiss your data goodbye forever.

Ransomware is terrifying. Trust us when we say that you want to avoid this at all costs.

And while absolutely anyone can become a victim of ransomware, it's usually small and medium sized businesses that are targeted. Cyber-criminals know this is a group that typically doesn't spend excessive time or money on cyber-security.

We don't want to bore (or scare) you with statistics, but it's worth you knowing it's estimated that 48% of businesses have been attacked with ransomware. That figure is rising every year.

The most common way for ransomware to get on your device or network is by someone clicking a link in a suspicious email. And before your jaw drops that someone – especially someone in your own business – would be naive enough to click a link in a scam email, you need to know these emails are really sophisticated nowadays.

Yes, these emails will look like dead ringers for genuine emails from someone you know or expect mail from – IRD, your bank, even a department within your own company. And they not only look like the real deal, but the email address maybe a very close copy too.

These emails work because they ask you to do something relatively simple; click to update your details, for example. Even looking with a critical eye, it can be hard to spot that something is wrong.

Once that ransomware is installed, there's not always an immediate attack. In fact, it can take between 60 to 100 days for anything to happen; sometimes even longer. That's for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the longer a hacker lurks within your network, the harder it is for you to detect them. Usually, hackers enter through one device that's connected to a network. Then they investigate your network for other weaknesses. Better for them to have control over as many devices as they can. They can also make it virtually impossible to kick them out once the attack has started.



This is what makes ransomware so difficult to deal with. And it's why prevention is always better than cure.

You need to be aware of the signs of a hacker in your network. Both you and your IT partner should look out for them:

- Unexpected new administrators appearing on your network
- Software being disabled
- New software being downloaded
- Remote access sessions lasting for days at a time

Of course there are many technical things to look for; but that will give you a good start.

A good IT partner will always recommend everyone in your business has regular cyber-security training. After all, your people are your first line of defence from cyber-attack. Software alone won't offer a good level of protection. You need software and humans.

Understand this, though: You can never be 100% protected from malware, ransomware, and other forms of attack. That's impossible, because it's a non-stop game where the criminals are always inventing something new, and the data security world has to catch up.

It is possible to be 99.99% protected; but you may be surprised to learn that we don't always agree with going that far.

You see, when you lock down **everything** to make your data security watertight, what you can inadvertently do is frustrate and annoy your staff. They'll have lots of extra layers of protection to go through, more steps in an already busy workload, and more to remember.

And what that means in the real world is that they'll skip steps, and look for ways to bypass security. Which actually puts your business more at risk.

Think of it like a door to an office. If you have seven big locks and a biometric scan just to open it, eventually, people will get frustrated and just prop the door open!

So to take away the frustration and hassle, we tend to use what we call "blended security". Where we pull together several products and services, which work together to protect you. It means fewer codes and passwords for your people, and a better level of security for your data.

And the greatest part is that every blend will be different, depending on the business it's for. That way we can customise security perfectly for each client, based on their specific requirements.



CHAPTER 5

WHY YOU SHOULD BE HIGHLY SKEPTICAL OF ALL IT COMPANIES



You probably don't know, what you don't know about IT. Does that make sense?

We think that's a fair assumption for us to make.

And why should you concern yourself with the latest tech news, software, and support updates? You're too busy doing what you do best.

You probably already read your industry magazines, blogs, visit trade shows, go to conferences, and attend training... you're an expert in your field. That's what experts do. You certainly don't have the time to do all of that for your IT too.

Would you expect your clients to know as much about your area of expertise as you do? Of course not. That's why they hire you, isn't it?

The same goes for us.

We totally absorb ourselves in the highly technical, high speed, rapidly changing world of technology. We genuinely love it and pride ourselves on having a level of expertise that most people don't.

You'd be shocked how many people consider themselves IT experts, simply because they know their way around computers. However, in reality, great IT companies operate on a completely different level – with better knowledge, tools, and systems.

The biggest problem when it comes to IT is that it's an unregulated industry. There's no governing body that people have to pass through to be allowed to call themselves an IT support or security company. No industry standard that has to be met. No guidelines on how the business must operate.

Just about anybody... *literally anybody*... can set themselves up and say they're an IT company.



This is why we say you should be highly skeptical of all IT companies.

Without asking the right questions, you simply don't know if you're putting your trust – and the security of your business data – in the hands of a reputable, honest company.

So how do you avoid choosing the wrong IT company?

Firstly, look for solidity. You need to check they have the right qualifications, accreditation, and experience. Remember, it's an unregulated industry, so you really need to do the legwork if you want to end up with the best possible IT partner.

Next, you ask them some difficult questions.

You don't want to see your potential new IT partner squirm, but you do want to make sure that they are going to deliver what you need. And asking difficult questions is the only way to be sure that you're making the right choice.

ASK THEM: “How quickly will problems be fixed?”

Obviously, this one will depend on the scale of the problem, but you need to know timeframes based on severity. How long will it take your proposed IT partner to acknowledge your issue in the first place? How long do they expect it'll take to get someone working on the problem?

Look at different scenarios. If you can't access your software, how long should it take to get you logged in. How long could it take to get your business up and running if you suffer a ransomware attack?



You also need to understand the approach your potential new partner will take. Do they have processes and procedures they stick to when issues arise, or are they winging it? Can they tell you about the worst problem they've encountered and how they dealt with it?

Remember, it's not the problem that you're judging them on, but rather how they responded to it. This can tell you a lot about their professionalism, knowledge, and ability to remain calm in a crisis.



ASK THEM: *“What do you do proactively, to make sure my team have fewer interruptions?”*

Downtime is a business killer.

You'll have seen it for yourself at some point, either in your own business or one you were working for. The internet goes down, for example, and people can't access the software they need to do their jobs. The office descends into chaos. Even those who aren't reliant on the internet stop doing what they're doing. The coffee machine goes into overdrive. Everyone forgets about their job for a while and makes the most of an unofficial break.

But then when things are up and running again, people don't immediately get back to business. Conversations are finished, systems are rebooted, everyone needs to regain their focus. And that often takes even more time. So what should have been a 15 minute interruption loses you 90 minutes of work.

And that's if it's a minor problem.

So what can your proposed IT partner do to minimise this downtime?

Will they be working away in the background, making the necessary checks to ensure that the majority of these little blips don't arise? Can they assure you that most updates and maintenance will be carried out outside of working hours?

Do they have any other solutions that will mean your business maintains productivity while essential work is taking place?



ASK THEM: *“Tell me about the specific people who’ll be looking after us.”*

Though it’s a really important question, many businesses overlook this side of things when it comes to working with a partner.

It’s really good to know about the actual people you’ll be working with. The people behind the business.

How does your proposed IT partner assign your account manager, for example? Do account managers have an area of sector expertise? Do they match you on how your personalities may work together?

Will you always be speaking to the same person? What happens if that person is on holiday or ill? Who will be doing your strategic IT reviews and building your technology roadmap? Who do you talk to if you’re not happy?

This question is a great way for you to get to know more about the company you’re hoping to work with. But it’s also a great way for you to figure out if their people are the right match for yours.

ASK THEM: *“Can you explain something deeply technical to me?”*

With this question, I’m not suggesting that you actually try to learn the ins and outs of building an IT infrastructure from the ground up. Rather, it demonstrates your potential IT partner’s ability to explain things to you in English; not tech- speak.

Can they explain a really complicated, technical process to you in a way that you can understand? Do they get frustrated if you ask too many questions? Do they brush you off with ‘you don’t need to know the technicalities of that’?

It’s vital, if you are partnering with someone, that you can communicate with each other clearly, without any confusion or breakdown.

It also demonstrates their ability to educate you.



ASK THEM: *“How will you keep on top of the constant changes in my business?”*



It's no secret that successful businesses deal with a lot of change. From adding new staff members, to tweaking the product or service you offer, it's likely that your business is forever changing things. It's the way we grow.

In fact, your business probably looks very different now to how it looked 12 months ago.

So how would your proposed IT partner cope with that? How much do they need to know about these changes? Will it affect what they're doing for you?

It should. Let's remind ourselves that you're looking for a partner here, not just another supplier. It's part of their role to be able to make recommendations based on how you're working. To suggest better software to use, a smoother network, more appropriate security.

If they can't keep track of how many people are working for you, or the ways you deliver your service, how can they suggest ways to grow, improve – and especially, stay secure?

Look for a new partner that takes an active interest in the changes happening within your business. Perhaps even arrange regular catch-up sessions to ensure they're on top of everything that's going on.

There are lots of other questions that you should be asking, but we feel these are the 5 that will tell you the most about your potential partner.



CHAPTER 6

WHAT EVERY IT COMPANY WISHES
YOU KNEW ABOUT IT





#1: YOUR SETUP NEEDS CONSTANT MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE. IT IS NOT A ONE-OFF JOB

Computers and other devices ask you to update them all the time. And that's because things are constantly changing.

The same applies to your network and infrastructure. Software is always changing; operating systems are being tweaked; and hardware deteriorates. It literally never ends.

It's virtually unheard of in professional IT circles that an IT setup isn't constantly monitored and maintained. If you're not offered 24/7 monitoring and maintenance as part of your IT contract, run a mile. You will start seeing issues before the ink on the contract is dry.

Most IT support companies do it all in the background and you simply never hear about it. In fact, a great IT support partner will spend a great deal of its time monitoring what's going on within your system, and fixing issues before you even realise you have a problem.

You'll simply never notice its going on. And really, that's exactly what you want; monitoring and maintenance you don't even notice.



#2: THE SUPPORT TRIANGLE IS LIKE THE HARDWARE TRIANGLE

Picture a triangle in your mind. The three equal sides of the triangle represent quality, price, and speed.

If you make one side longer, then all the sides will lengthen to keep the triangle together. For example if you pick a faster computer, typically the quality and price will also increase.

IT support has an identical triangle with the same three sides: Quality, price, and speed. If you buy cheap IT support, it'll be slow and lower quality. And vice versa.

Ideally, you'll look at what you can realistically afford to spend on IT support, and go with the top of your budget. That's because you understand IT support is actually an investment into your business. Get your IT setup and your business IT strategy right; and it makes hitting business goals so much easier.





#3: WE ASK FOR A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT YOU MORE THAN US

We don't want to work with people short-term.

We refuse to do ad-hoc work, and one-off crisis management.

We only want to work with businesses as part of a long-term partnership.

Why?

Well, obviously, it's good for us to build our own business around long-term clients.

But the real benefit of long-term partnerships for us comes from the investment we're able to make in our clients. So that we know you inside out. It means we can:

- Work more closely with you
- Learn about your priorities and take an active part in getting you towards your goals
- Customise your infrastructure and IT strategy around where you're heading, rather than where you currently are
- Build an infrastructure that grows with your business
- Keep you better protected, because we can take an honest and strategic approach when we work as part of a trusting partnership.

When you work with someone on a short-term basis, it's impossible to do this.

A long-term partnership means we'll be as invested as you will be. Because we genuinely care about your business. If you're doing well, we are too.





#4: OUTSOURCED IS BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY. AND IT HELPS YOU ACCESS BETTER EXPERTISE THAN THE SAME SPEND IN-HOUSE

As you're reviewing your IT support, it's probably crossed your mind that you could hire an in-house employee.

There's a big downside to be aware of. When you have an in-house person, you're asking them to do several different specialised jobs, and support a huge number of people, all at the same time.

Someone that can do that without having some kind of breakdown would be hard to find! Certainly they'd soon learn to cut corners, just to get home on time each day.

When you outsource this work, you might pay a little more than an in-house person. But you're gaining access to multiple people, with a broad range of skills and specialities. And they don't go home until the work is done.



CHAPTER 7

HOW TO HELP YOUR INTERNAL
IT PEOPLE, IF YOU HAVE THEM



Sometimes, the businesses we work with have internal IT people. And a senior member of staff who takes on responsibility for the IT, without actually having a background in IT themselves.

If that's you, then you should be scared..

Not because you don't have the skillset. But because if your IT goes badly wrong – We are talking ransomware attacks or similar, large scale problems – the responsibility rests with you.

Luckily, there is a solution to protect both you and the business. It's called co-managed IT support.

You retain your in-house IT people. And we help them with whatever support they need, at whatever level.

The best way to describe our help is to imagine a ring donut, with your internal IT person in the middle.



They benefit from support all round:

- At the bottom: Help handling the low level stuff that's important, but can be overwhelming. Such as being the help desk for your staff; monitoring the network; rolling out updates
- At the sides: Support at their skill level, to help them cope with workload, and have direct access to an experienced IT team to bounce ideas off
- From above: High level strategic advice and long-term planning

Our job is to compliment your internal IT people. But add in the partnership and strategic overview. So there's plenty of high level thinking and support on tap.

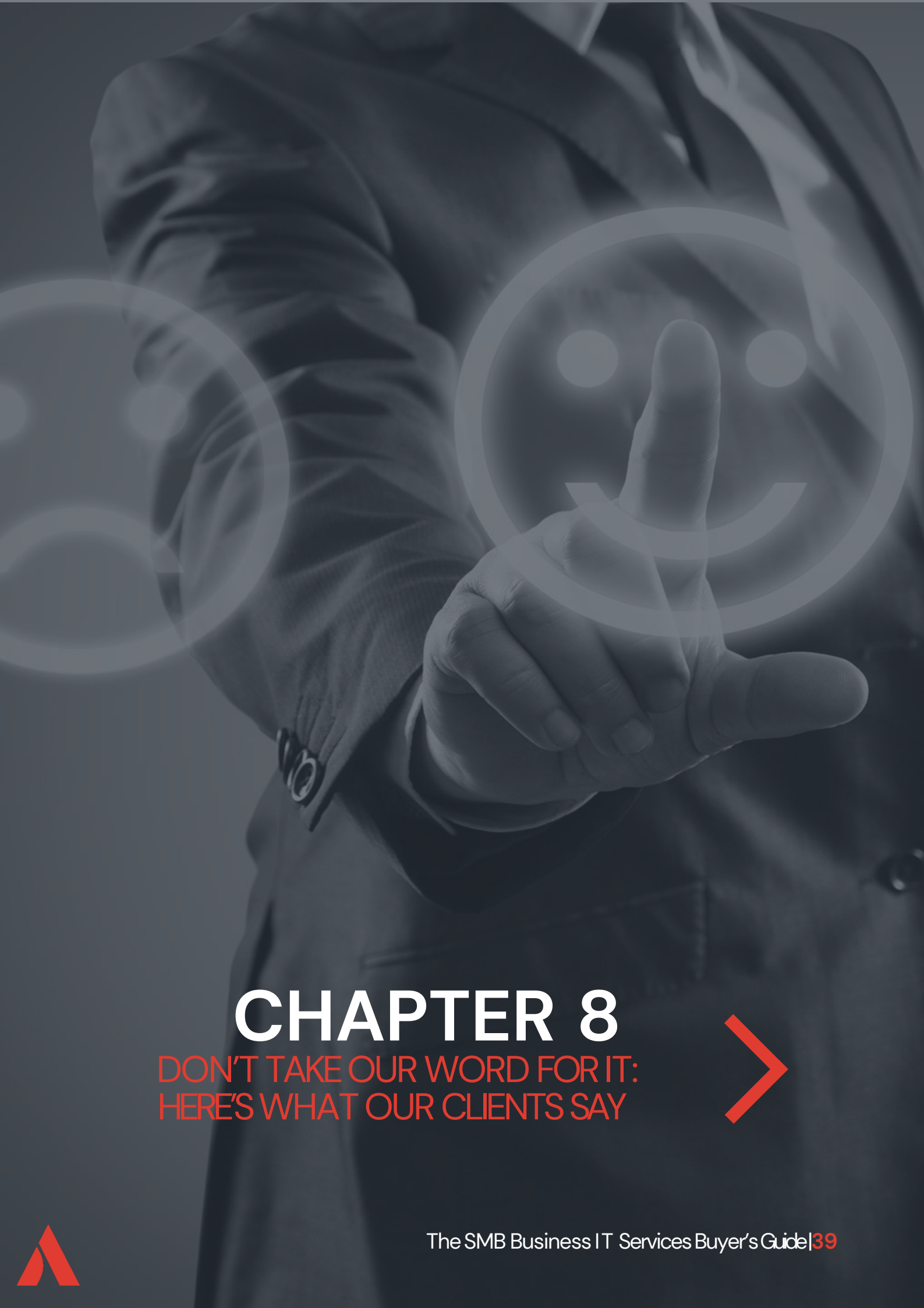
This gets the most out of your internal resource. And also fully protects you, as the person with ultimate responsibility.

Some IT managers see outsourced IT support partners as a threat.

We are not a threat.

Our job is to make you and your internal IT people look great, and operate brilliantly.
When you look great, so do we – we all win!





CHAPTER 8

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT:
HERE'S WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY



We've covered all of the bases, and by now you should really know what you want and need in your own IT partner.

It's all very well us telling you how an IT partner can literally change your business.

It's time you heard from some of our clients about the reality of working with us.

FAST AND EFFECTIVE



Ageing hardware and difficulty of migrating control apps to a new platform (meant a total rebuild, reconfig, re-commissioning) but virtualisation of servers was chosen to improve availability and recoverability. There was doubt as to whether w2000k based server, real time controls, data-links / databases, HMIs, engineering and diagnostics would work properly. Advantage worked through these issues with us, trial runs were made on hot-spare systems, providing a fast and effective way of virtualising this.

WINSTONE PULP INTERNATIONAL

OHAKUNE

MANAGED SERVICES PARTNER



McVerry Crawford consulted with Advantage towards a hosted cloud solution, ongoing managed support and security services for our four regionally based dealerships. The result was a successfully delivered project migrating and updating old on-premise servers to a complete hosted solution with minimal disruption. The Advantage helpdesk and SOC teams continue to provide ongoing proactive maintenance, security monitoring and immediate support to a high standard.

MCVERRY CRAWFORD

MANAWATU / RANGITIKEI



SECURITY PARTNER



Being a Building Society, our security is of upmost importance and selecting the right partner to take us on the security journey was crucial. Advantage took the time to understand our business and worked closely with our partners to roll out various security solutions covering multiple areas. Advantage keeps our staff engaged with monthly CyberSecurity training and their SOC watches our business 24/7 for Cyberattacks.

NELSON BUILDING SOCIETY

NELSON



SOLUTIONS PARTNER



Liquorland has undergone some major projects in the last 6 months with a focus on upgrading and managing a large device fleet around the country. Advantage has worked with the team to understand the environment challenges, shared with us best practice and quickly tabled tactical solutions. We rolled out the Advantage Pulseway RMM tool and now our IT team can easily and cost effectively remotely manage all endpoints from anywhere. Advantage has also taken over our endpoint security management with their Managed Detection and Response solution, watching our endpoints 24/7 for Cyberattacks.

LIQUORLAND

AUCKLAND

LiquorLand

AN A-GRADE FACILITY



About a year ago UCOL decided to move all core systems off premise and to the Advantage data centre. The Advantage facilities are 'A' grade and the staff are competent and very accommodating. They are solution focussed and instead of logging a ticket, we can pick up the phone and talk to a person. The process of getting to where we are has been very smooth thanks to the can-do attitude of the Advantage staff.

UCOL

PALMERSTON NORTH



SECURITY PARTNER



Advantage have been a trusted partner of Property Brokers for over 10 years now supporting our 43 branches and almost 800 endpoints. More recently Advantage has been providing a significant amount of assistance in the security space; it is just no longer possible to maintain the sort of knowledge you need to stay ahead of all the latest threats inhouse so having an experienced partner in this space is invaluable. In a number of instances Advantage have provided immediate assistance as a result of a cyber attack and have provided us with solutions and guidance to ensure that we continue to reduce our exposure.

PROPERTY BROKERS

NEW ZEALAND



CHAPTER 9

About us



Let's properly introduce ourselves

Advantage have been around for a while; over 36 years in fact. We started out building hardware for the local New Zealand market back in the early Eighties. Once the big brands moved in, we pivoted into hosted services, building a state-of-the-art Tier 3 datacentre providing cloud services and disaster recovery infrastructure.

As the landscape continued to change, and our customer base grew, there was a natural progression into the security space. Most of our customers were in the financial, legal, and medical industries where regulatory requirements necessitated a focus on protecting data and systems.

Our business has continued to evolve and today we also provide Security Services that are fully supported by our 24x7 Security Operations Centre (SOC).

We have offices in Auckland, Palmerston North and Wellington, servicing customers throughout New Zealand and the Pacific region.

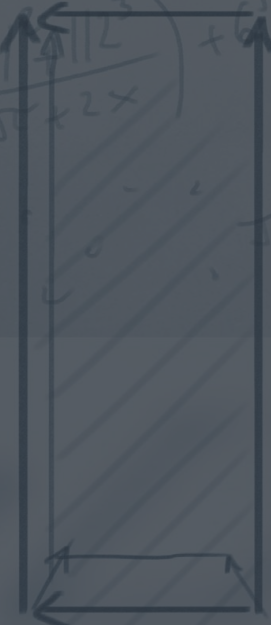
Our customers are the focus of everything we do. We want to understand your business needs and through a partnership approach, tailor bespoke solutions to suit your requirements.

We deliver and support a full suite of highly regarded IT support, cloud and security solutions. A key differentiator is our ability to weave the right technology together and pair this with an Advantage service overlay, providing holistic protection that allows you to navigate a changing technology landscape securely. All support is delivered by our highly experienced New-Zealand based team.



CHAPTER 10

WHAT WILL TYPICALLY HAPPEN
DURING YOUR FIRST 90 DAYS



If you're ready to explore working with us, here's some important information you need to know.

When we begin to work together, the first 90 days are the most critical.

My team and I will be working on three key areas:

- 1 Learning as much as we can about your business
- 2 Fixing any outstanding problems left behind by your old IT company
- 3 Creating your technology strategy

We hope and expect to work with you for years to come, in our partnership. So our goal in these first 90 days is to set you up for success.

You'll know what we can and can't do, with realistic expectations. What we need from you. And how to be a great partner.

We'll survey absolutely everything, and examine every tiny part of your current IT setup. The more we know the better. All of the answers are fully documented in our secure systems.

We'll even ask about your website hosting and examine any specialist software you use.



Even if we're not directly supporting these things, we still want to know how it works and who's supporting it. At some stage in our relationship, you're going to ask us about it. So we need to know about every single service or third party vendor you're currently using.

Of course it will mean there's a bit of work for you and your team. But we promise it will be worthwhile. And you'll only need to do it once.

Once the team has all the information, they'll strategically analyse it. To make sure they understand every aspect of your technology. Any IT support company that doesn't do this is simply not doing their job properly.

Then we're going to talk to your team.

We'll find out what their existing IT problems are; what frustrates them; and what makes their job more difficult. We'll also review anything your previous IT provider told them couldn't be done, fixed, or created. There's no promise we can make it happen. But of course we'll try.

Your first 90 days are going to reset everything. And then get your entire IT setup back up to the high level it needs to be (and where it will stay).

Then we begin our strategic, forward-thinking work together.

Here's what to do next.....

We hope that you have found this guide useful. Please feel free to get in touch with us if you would like to discuss IT Support or IT Security Services.





This is how you can get in touch with us:

CALL: 0800 358 8999 | **EMAIL** sales@advantage.co.nz | advantage.nz