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What to Look for in an MSP

You've found a couple of MSPs and you're ready to meet with them! Now use the list below to make sure you ask the right questions and get the best answers. It may take a few tries before you find a company that meets your needs but the payoff will be well worth the effort!

What is the average time for them to notify you of a low-priority alarm?

The average initial response time for non-critical responses should be 15 minutes or less. Mission-critical issues like ransomware attacks or failed disks should be responded to in under 5 minutes.

How long is the onboarding process?

This will vary depending on how much rebuild is required. It may be only a few hours to several weeks, but it is important to know how long it will take so you can understand the process.

Do they offer multi-vendor support?

A good MSP should take responsibility for all aspects of supporting your application and technology.

Does the MSP have strong reviews and referrals?

Don't just take their word for it. Check their online reviews beyond their website like Google review and Yelp. You should also ask how long most of their customers stay with them. If their customer life span is short this is a red flag.

How will they help prepare for future needs?

Your MSP should understand where your technology is today and where you want it to take you. For example, you may need to plan for infrastructure changes and storage increases. With customer growth comes the need for heightened security, make sure your provider is committed to monitoring. Partnering with an expert will ensure your company's future success and safety.

How will they help reduce IT costs?

Your IT support costs should be more like insurance payments than bleeding repair costs. Get a flat-rate plan that ensures you are protected in the event of an issue.

Does the company have experience within your industry?

Having a provider with experience in your industry is helpful but very few MSPs are single-focused businesses. This means the best MSPs service a broad and diverse background of clients.

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How fast can an expert provide service when you need it?

Not all questions are the same and neither are all technicians. Some situations need an immediate response, other times a delay may be acceptable. A good MSP will get to know your needs and be able to provide the support that suits your business while keeping costs low.

Do the technicians have experience supporting your company's software?

Many MSPs have shifted their focus to selling new products and services and not on understanding your needs. Your MSP should know your applications (or learn them). How could they support software they do not know?

Is outbound traffic monitored and if so, what is monitored?

All outbound traffic should be monitored, and unexpected or unusual traffic patterns should cause an alert. Ransomware attacks typically start with a downloaded agent contacting the attacker for instructions. Those connections should trigger an alert and immediate action from the MSP.

How do they protect data from unauthorized access?

You are looking for a cloud vendor or MSP that will enable instruction detection, event log monitoring, and geo-blocking to build a flexible inbound shield. It's important that the MSP have a plan to protect from overseas bad actor attacks.

What is the MSP's standard actionable incident response plan?

Ask for an example plan that they use to support other, similar clients. They should have a good, flexible, response plan custom-designed for you.

Do they conduct automated security scans?

There should be a constantly running filter and scan on all inbound and outbound traffic as well as a detailed hidden trojan scan to be used as needed.

What is their disaster recovery plan?

You need to know exactly what to do if, and when, things go awry. The plan may be as simple as booting up a different machine or from a different location. It is important that your MSP blend response and application support to provide immediate application and desktop access from