IT MANAGED SERVICES
A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE TO IT

a THRIVE Company

INTRODUCTION

IT and communications technology sits at the very heart of most organisations; powering a diverse range of workflows and enabling your organisation to compete effectively in an increasingly connected, automated and digitised world.

With the majority of IT spend originating outside the IT department, an IT discussion today involves stakeholders from across the business. These business users expect business outcomes from their IT spend and frequently place user experience above integration and management considerations.

As organisations pursue a transformational digital agenda, they adopt greater levels of process automation and migrate to a hybrid infrastructure model. However, with any strategy that embraces digitisation, there is a risk of adding complexity, risk and administrative overhead.

There is a rising expectation that IT departments should be able to deliver more services, quicker and with less resource, whilst headcount is typically kept to the minimum required to deliver against the agreed SLAs.

The knock-on effect of growing complexity and limited resource is that IT departments spend an increasing amount of time fighting fires or simply "keeping the lights on" and not enough time planning for future innovation.

If technology is to fulfil its role as a business enabler, IT departments need to be able to prioritise workloads and free up valuable internal resource to develop and implement a more strategic approach to systems development.

Increasingly, organisations are turning to managed network service providers as the solution to this problem. Outsourcing the day-to-day monitoring and management of systems can help realise significant cost benefits whilst improving flexibility, agility, security and performance.

Outsourcing does not mean giving up control or adding risk. On the contrary, a well-managed infrastructure enables IT to have greater control over their technology estate, provides access to expertise they may not retain in-house and allows them to shape future developments in line with long-term objectives.

BUSINESS IT – AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

The traditional 5-year technology cycle of planning, implementation, maintenance and obsolescence is no longer relevant for the majority of organisations. Cloud computing has seen an increasing number of essential services moved off-premises, networks have become software-defined and infrastructure has become borderless.

As organisations embrace digital transformation they are able to deliver new services up and down the supply chain, to employees, customers and suppliers alike. The more connected an organisation is, the more it depends upon the availability, scalability and flexibility of its infrastructure.

As networks become more complex, IT departments can find themselves with less time available to ensure essential services are developed and maintained effectively.

Recent years have seen a shift away from simply reducing costs and having a break fix contract, to using proactive monitoring and maintenance services to prevent service-affecting issues.

The speed of change within the IT environment shows little sign of slowing down and organisations are reticent to commit capital expenditure to a solution that will be outdated before they can realise a significant return on their investment.

Fortunately, the flexibility and scalability of Cloud solutions allow organisations to react quickly to changing computing needs and rapidly deploy or retire solutions as and when they need them.

With Cloud adoption on the increase, a Cloud and on-premises hybrid infrastructure with outsourced managed services is becoming the new standard and IT funding is shifting away from capital expenditure to a predictable, operational expenditure model.

As the physical location of hardware within your virtual infrastructure becomes less relevant, the quality of your connectivity becomes increasingly important. In a big data environment, systems management is also evolving as hardware monitoring and management shares the limelight with data collation and analytics.

User behaviour has changed significantly over the past 5 years. As business IT becomes increasingly user-centric and adopts policies and experiences from the fast-moving consumer market, it adds a layer of complexity to the infrastructure.

If internal policies or solutions are seen as inhibitors, organisations are exposing themselves to potential risk. Users are spoilt for choice when it comes to Cloud and mobile solutions and will go off-grid if there is a more intuitive option available. The increased use of “shadow IT” is one of the signs that your IT model might not be fit for purpose.

IS YOUR IT FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Business as usual for many IT departments means juggling the day to day management of an increasingly complex infrastructure. It also involves getting to grips with the demands of next-generation and software-defined networks whilst addressing the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. However, this leaves little time to focus on the strategic direction for IT and making sure it remains aligned to overall objectives.

This is something that should not be ignored, as a misaligned IT strategy can impact on the organisation as a whole. Here are some key signs that your IT might not be fit for purpose:

1. YOU'RE NOT REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF YOUR TECHNOLOGY
As your IT estate continues to experience organic growth, you are experiencing diminishing returns on your investment in technology. System sprawl, changing user demands and a lack of cohesion across the estate means some components are under-utilised and others are stretched to breaking point.

2. SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT HAS BECOME A BURDEN
There is an art to managing an IT estate that is more than simply keeping the lights on. If your management tools and processes are inefficient and don't provide you with the diagnostics you need then it will have a negative impact on your organisation.

3 YOUR COSTS ARE SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL
The modern mantra for IT departments is "more for less". If you're struggling to keep costs under control, not only are you failing to achieve this objective but it might also be a sign that something is broken. Maintaining an expensive in-house resource that spends most of its time doing low-end services simply doesn't make sense.

4. YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN SERVICE LEVELS
If you are managing on the borders of chaos every month you will be spending all your time doing short-term fixes, with no time to work on a longer-term strategy for service innovation and improvement. As a result, you see an increase in downtime and extended change management timelines.

5. YOU'RE BEING CUT OUT OF THE LOOP
With two-thirds of IT spend originating outside of the IT department, IT may feel like it is losing its voice in the decision-making process. As line-of-business users demand business outcomes, they are turning to Cloud service providers to deliver more responsive "as-a-service" solutions.

6. YOUR USERS ARE COMPLAINING MORE OFTEN
With the consumerisation of IT, employees have become accustomed to a slick user experience across multiple devices. This places an additional burden on IT departments to deliver intuitive, user-centric technologies that are always available on any device.

7. YOU ARE FALLING BEHIND THE COMPETITION
When your IT starts impacting on the customer experience it is a clear sign that something is wrong. You could be slow to market with new services or customers could be getting frustrated with outdated or incompatible systems. In a competitive landscape, these small factors can mean the difference between retaining and losing a customer.

ALIGNING IT TO BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

It is important to recognise that your ICT has an integral role to play in helping your organisation realise its long-term objectives. Although "optimise IT" may be the stated objective, the knock-on effects of good (or bad) IT can be felt throughout the organisation.

A shift from capital-intensive, on-premises hardware to utility-based Cloud services can provide significant savings over the lifetime of your IT. Secondary cost benefits can be realised as a result of a reduced on-premises estate and enabling remote or mobile working.

Business agility is dependent upon scalability and flexibility. The ability to react quickly to changing market conditions could mean the difference between exploiting a new opportunity or missing out on one.

In a digital marketplace, organisations are expected to be able to provide services to users, customers and suppliers, 24 hours a day. The ability to provide "real-time" services places an additional demand on IT service levels.

Resilience and availability are also essential to workforce productivity; minimising downtime and providing ubiquitous access to data and applications anywhere, on any device. Technology has also made effective collaboration between remote workers a reality, with hi-definition audio and video and secure file sharing eliminating the need to travel.

Technology permeates every aspect of users' lives so it should be simple and intuitive to use. Putting the user at the heart of your infrastructure boosts adoption rates and overall satisfaction. The gamification or consumerisation of corporate IT has helped create an environment that users are familiar with and eliminate resistance to change.

The bottom line for most organisations is to improve revenue generation or profitability and can be achieved by effectively delivering on the other stated objectives: reducing costs, enhancing agility, improving productivity and making the most of any legacy investment in technology.

MANAGED SERVICE ADOPTION ON THE INCREASE

Across the UK, organisations of all types are opting to outsource elements of their ICT; in the form of Cloud, hosted or managed services. It is easy to see why, as the appeal of reliable access to next-generation technologies and services at a predictable monthly cost is strong.

As users demand improvements in performance, availability, security and reliability you might ask why organisations are choosing to outsource such critical services. Rather than seeing these as internal issues, more and more organisations are turning to managed service contracts to help improve service levels whilst maintaining financial and strategic control over their infrastructure.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR MANAGED SERVICES

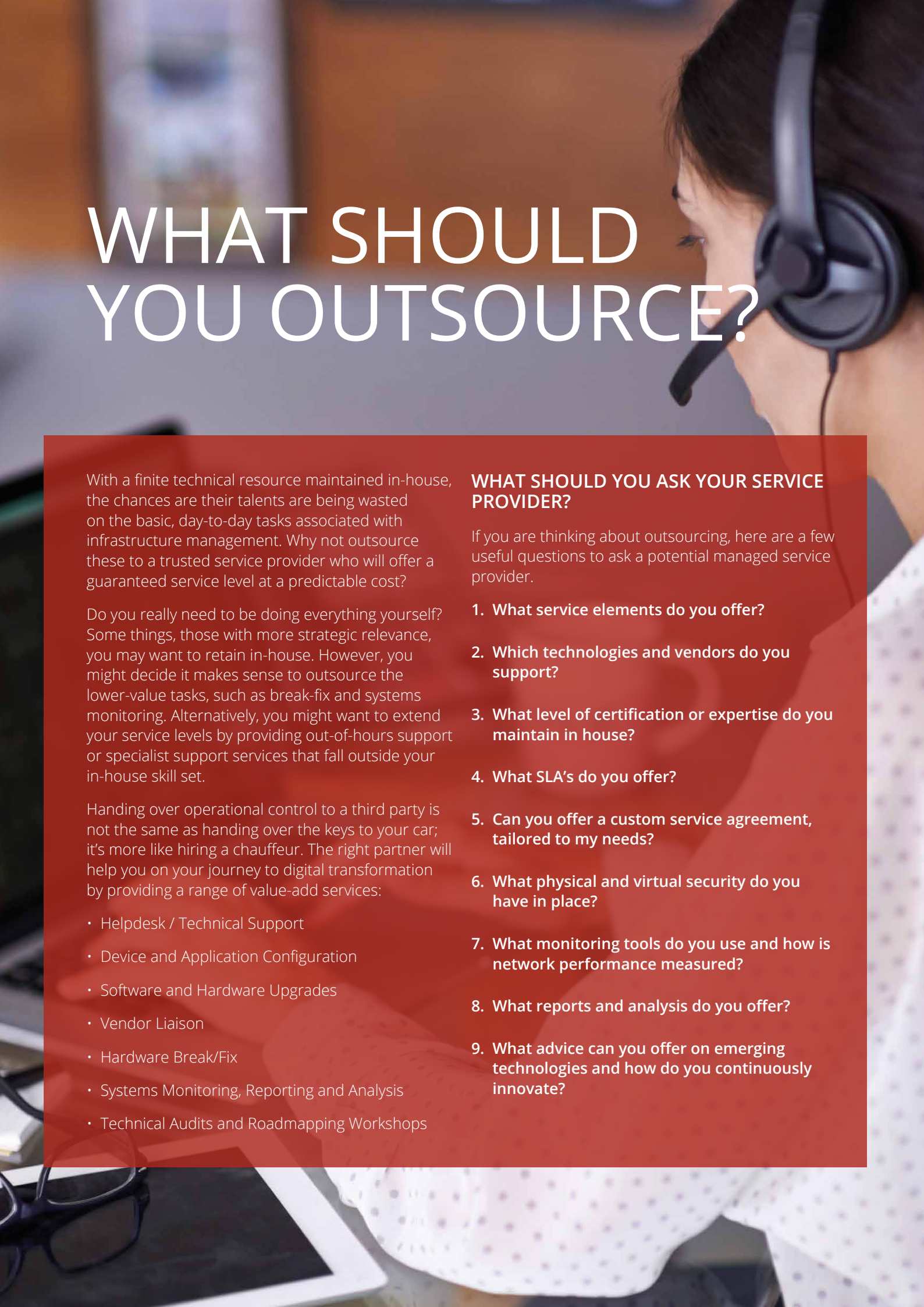
- The pay-as-you-grow model of Cloud and managed services means your ICT comes at a predictable monthly cost
- The inherent scalability and flexibility of managed services means they are always the right size for your organisation
- Outsourcing elements of your infrastructure allows you to realise cost savings on systems maintenance, monitoring and training
- Free up your valuable IT resources to spend time on long-term strategic development rather than day-to-day maintenance
- Leverage best-in-class technologies that may have been beyond your budget for an on-premises solution
- Access detailed network performance data and diagnostics to support management decision making and continuous improvement
- Streamline the process of on-boarding new users, services or solutions and guarantee compatibility with legacy systems
- Enhance systems security for big data, essential applications, digital transactions and business continuity

THE FINANCIAL EQUATION

Outsourcing systems management to a service provider shouldn't represent a significant investment for most organisations. The most significant elements of operational costs will be spent on maintaining an in-house technical resource.

As an IT estate grows, it impacts on the efficiency of an in-house department. Systems sprawl adds to complexity and keeping your techs trained on all the latest technologies takes both time and money.

Take a look at what you're delivering in-house and what might be more cost-effectively delivered by a third party service provider. Through outsourcing you could release some capital and free up some human resource that can be re-directed to achieve the overriding strategic business objectives.



WHAT SHOULD YOU OUTSOURCE?

With a finite technical resource maintained in-house, the chances are their talents are being wasted on the basic, day-to-day tasks associated with infrastructure management. Why not outsource these to a trusted service provider who will offer a guaranteed service level at a predictable cost?

Do you really need to be doing everything yourself? Some things, those with more strategic relevance, you may want to retain in-house. However, you might decide it makes sense to outsource the lower-value tasks, such as break-fix and systems monitoring. Alternatively, you might want to extend your service levels by providing out-of-hours support or specialist support services that fall outside your in-house skill set.

Handing over operational control to a third party is not the same as handing over the keys to your car; it's more like hiring a chauffeur. The right partner will help you on your journey to digital transformation by providing a range of value-add services:

- Helpdesk / Technical Support
- Device and Application Configuration
- Software and Hardware Upgrades
- Vendor Liaison
- Hardware Break/Fix
- Systems Monitoring, Reporting and Analysis
- Technical Audits and Roadmapping Workshops

WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER?

If you are thinking about outsourcing, here are a few useful questions to ask a potential managed service provider.

1. **What service elements do you offer?**
2. **Which technologies and vendors do you support?**
3. **What level of certification or expertise do you maintain in house?**
4. **What SLA's do you offer?**
5. **Can you offer a custom service agreement, tailored to my needs?**
6. **What physical and virtual security do you have in place?**
7. **What monitoring tools do you use and how is network performance measured?**
8. **What reports and analysis do you offer?**
9. **What advice can you offer on emerging technologies and how do you continuously innovate?**

AVAILABLE FROM ONI:

- Managed Services & Support
- Hosting & Colocation
- Networking & Connectivity
- Back-Up & Disaster Recovery
- Cybersecurity Solutions
- Contact Centre Solutions
- Mobility & Collaboration
- Unified Communications

01582 429 999
www.oni.co.uk
marketing@oni.co.uk
16-22 Crawley Green Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 0QX

ONI
a THRIVE Company

Cisco Partner Gold Certified

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE | Accredited Until 2021

Established in 1992, ONI Ltd is a leading provider of IT services and solutions.
We deliver a unique blend of on-site, hybrid and Cloud computing systems, from our Tier 3+ UK data centres.
Our workforce holds over 400 accreditations from vendors such as Cisco, VMware, NetApp, Veeam, Gamma, BT and Microsoft.