

Outsourced IT

The benefits of moving your IT needs offsite

INTERVIEWED BY JAYNE GEST

As business technology grows more important and complex, many organizations have found it makes sense to outsource their information technology.

“By using a managed service provider, they’re able to outsource that function to someone who’s an expert at it and allow their staff to focus on their main business objectives,” says Eric Thal, managed services manager at Blue Technologies. “It also enables their internal IT directors and staff to work on strategic initiatives, rather than helpdesk-type questions.”

Smart Business spoke with Thal about the advantages of outsourcing your IT and what to keep in mind as you make the switch.

Why do companies outsource their IT?

The biggest reason is focus. Companies can focus on the product or service they’re in business for, freeing up employees to work on high-value strategic initiatives. The managed service provider can even take on the role of dealing with outside vendors, so there’s no more waiting on hold to find out what’s going on with the internet connectivity.

Many businesses find it difficult to staff an IT role or department. Often, the office manager or controller has to wear a second hat and be the IT point person. Plus, if there’s turnover or someone goes on vacation, it’s challenging to ensure the level of service remains high.

Working with a managed service provider, who acts as a virtual CIO, enables a company to predictably budget its technology costs for a given quarter or year. With managed services, it becomes an operating expense. So, it’s a consistent, predictable spend to manage the IT infrastructure, as opposed to large capital

ERIC THAL
Managed services manager
Blue Technologies

(216) 271-4800, ext. 2636
ethal@btohio.com



FOLLOW UP: For questions about securing your data offsite, contact Blue Technologies.



Insights Technology is brought to you by **Blue Technologies Inc.**

expenses every couple of years. Or working on a break-fix model — something breaks, the provider comes and fixes it, and then because they did that in June, June’s bill is significantly more than the rest of the year.

Finally, it reduces the risk. An outsourced expert will better understand cybersecurity, which mitigates the risk of security breaches that can cause damage to the technology, the organization, and its reputation. The managed service provider can proactively monitor the network to identify and solve potential issues before they cause downtime. It also can help vet new technology and ensure the business has an accurate inventory of all assets. The outside firm helps ease day-to-day management while equipping the company for future growth.

What types of businesses are more likely to outsource their IT?

While all types and sizes of organizations can benefit from outside IT help, a lot of it is compliance-driven around credit cards and health care information, or the compliance requirements for anyone that supplies technology or products to the government or deals with customers in the European Union. For example, a small doctor’s office won’t want a full-time IT staff on-site, but it’s important to make sure the hard drives are encrypted, and no

one has access to personally identifiable information or health care records.

It’s also difficult to staff up every domain that’s needed. A midsize organization might have one or two on staff, but those one or two people aren’t experts in everything related to IT. An outside provider can help fill any gaps.

In addition, if a company has a large geographic footprint or many employees who work from home, it can be difficult to have in-house IT that can handle the different users and their locations.

How should companies pick an outsource provider?

When looking for a potential partner, make sure they use a well-established framework, like ITIL, to manage the IT infrastructure. Not every engineer or managed service provider knows these frameworks as well as they should.

You want an outsourced partner with a strong onboarding process because the first 90 days are critical. That’s when they do an initial assessment of the network and use that as a blueprint for the roadmap and plan going forward. Then, the relationship will become a virtual CIO position where the outside firm meets regularly with the owners or a team to review what’s working, what’s not working, what adjustments need to be made, and help them plan for the future. ●