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THE 6-STEP ROADMAP FOR SMALL IT DEPARTMENTS

IS IT TIME TO MAKE SERIOUS HEADWAY WITH YOUR BACKLOG?

TIRED OF LIMPING ALONG WITH PROBLEMS THAT NEVER GO AWAY?

CONCERNED THAT YOU'RE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO SUPPORT YOUR COMPANY AND IT'S GROWTH?

You've come to the right place. Let's get started.

1 IMPLEMENT A SERVICE TICKETING SYSTEM TO GET OUT OF "EMAIL HELL"

When you manage requests for support via email, you're more prone to see mistakes, inefficiencies, and miscommunications in the process. A ticketing system creates efficiency when used properly and there are many good solutions out there to consider.

- If you have a CRM or ERP system, there may be a ticketing system functionality as part of it. Otherwise, products like Zendesk or Zoho are available, or Spiceworks if you're looking for a free version.

- Don't eliminate email as an option for requesting support, but create a universal email address (such as helpdesk@yourcompany.com) for your entire department and then have those requests put into the system.

- Make use of the automated email features, documentation, and reporting options in the system. It will help you build consistency and a culture of accountability.

2 **CLEARLY DOCUMENT PROCESS AND RESPONSE EXPECTATIONS**

This is like a mini roadmap inside the IT roadmap. It outlines how you are going to manage requests and how to document support and activities.

- Create categories for request/ ticket priorities.

  Priority 1 might be something that effects the entire company or an entire department
  Priority 2 is an urgent request affecting only one person or a few people
  Priority 3 is a common day to day request such as problems connecting to a printer.

- Create response time expectations for each ticket priority.

  Priority 1 tickets have a response time of 15 minutes
  Priority 2 tickets, 60 minutes
  Priority 3 tickets, one business day
  Remind staff that, "response time" does not mean the request is resolved. It means it has been acknowledged you've started the process of resolving it.

- Document the process for all of your standard, every-day procedures as well as the steps used to resolve and manage individual tickets. This is another case where the ticketing system can help tremendously. If someone on your IT team is away or leaves, you want to be able to bring someone else in who can pick up where they left off.

3 CREATE A TEAM COORDINATOR ROLE

We aren't suggesting you hire anyone new, but we are suggesting you create an official role for someone already in the company. This could be a good role for a junior IT person or an administrator who has an understanding of IT. The role isn't to "coordinate" the team, rather the role is to keep things going.

This is one change that will really impact what your IT team focuses on each day. If the logistics are handled by a coordinator, the rest of the team can focus on solving problems. This can improve your job satisfaction and has a big impact on bottlenecks. The role should include the following responsibilities:

- Respond to all requests/ tickets for IT support as soon as possible. This doesn't mean they resolve the issue, it just means they acknowledge it and let the person know that the ball is rolling.

- Prioritize all requests/ tickets so they are handled accordingly.

- Manage all communications to the IT help desk either via a universal phone number or email address.

4 INVEST IN THE RIGHT AUTOMATION TOOLS

The right automation tools can be game-changers. They lead to big improvements in productivity, quality, and consistency when used correctly.

What kind of automation tools make sense for your company will depend on the size of your team and what tools you have in place already. Here are a few suggestions.

- For a larger team, consider a product like LabTech or Kaseya with creates opportunities for automating different processes, lets your IT team access computers remotely, and lets your team work on more than one machine at a time.

- Smaller teams (or solo professionals) will benefit from remote control tools so they don't have to physically be at a computer to troubleshoot it. This is especially important if you have more than one office or have employees who work remotely or travel extensively.

- Put maintenance on "cruise control". While things like patch and antivirus updates might not seem exciting, they're important, can be frequent, and really should be done quickly and automatically to avoid any compatibility or security concerns.

5 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR ROLE

More and more companies are setting the bar higher for their IT team. They want someone who can contribute strategically while at the same time being an expert at everything. But you can't do it all.

When considering the priority of your IT team, keep these things in mind.

- Let management know if you're overloaded and can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. They should understand it's hard to keep a good employee under those circumstances.

- More companies want IT to be strategic and help improve the bottom line. Some of the most in-demand IT roles are for project managers, business and data analysists, and security professionals. These roles aren't trouble shooting day-today problems, they're tackling bigger picture projects and initiatives.

- There is growing adoption of automation technology and Co-Managed IT support services. It can facilitate the transition into a strategic role for IT staff by taking care of the routine tasks.

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6 EXPLORE CO-MANAGED IT OPTIONS

Adding more staff usually isn't a cost-effective option for an SMB. Plus, it's unlikely that another team member would bring all the expertise and resources you'd need. That's why more and more companies are turning to Co-Managed IT to help bridge the gap.

- Co-Managed IT supports day to day and routine activities so you can focus on other IT priorities. This also gives you access to a larger team who can correct some of those persistent problems and get you out of a break-fix loop.

- Bringing a partner in to help manage your IT can create some significant monthly savings over hiring additional support staff. For example, A network administrator in the Chicago area can range from $68,500 and $102,000 per year. Depending on the number of employees, Co-Managed IT support can cost between $36,000 - $72,000 with more support and expertise. Credible service providers will agree to services for a fixed monthly fee.

- You can define the level of support you want with most IT service providers. Most will offer you some combination of computer and server support, remote network monitoring, data backup and disaster recovery, custom software solutions, and technology evaluation and planning. How you structure your agreement should be based on the skills and expertise you most need support with.

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READY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CO-MANAGED IT? LET'S TALK.

Not sure if Co-Managed IT services are right for you, your company, or your budget. We're here to help you figure that out.

Contact us today.

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