Xceptional

Managed IT Services for Small Businesses: Providing Value Throughout the Operation

10089 Willow Creek Road Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92131
(858) 225-6230

www.xceptional.com

Small businesses have a lot to worry about. Between the burdens of regulators and the complexities of compliance and employment laws, it's easy to see why some small businesses have a tough time getting off the ground. However, thanks to the sheer number of small businesses out there, there is a host of services devoted to taking some of that managerial strain off the small business' shoulder. One major service is managed IT services, which has been delivering significant value to small businesses everywhere for over 10 years.

WHAT ARE MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES?

Managed IT services are information technology (IT) solutions, management, and support provided by a service party. The service provider assumes many of the responsibilities formerly held by the small business, including ensuring availability of the services, repair if something goes wrong, and updates as required.

WHAT MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES CAN DO

Managed IT services for small businesses are simple in concept but broad-ranging in scope. Organizations that choose managed IT services will find a wide range of options available, covering nearly every facet of a small business' operations.

Network security
Managed IT services can include 24/7 monitoring with or without reports, as well as cloud backup services to make sure your data is always available. These are particularly useful assets for a small business that has compliance to worry about – especially ones in heavily regulated industries such as healthcare or financial services.

Disaster planning

Cloud backup can be a big help on another front as well: disaster planning. By keeping what amounts to a copy of your data available somewhere else, it becomes accessible if it's needed later on. For example, if there's a fire at the office, all the company's data could go up in smoke along with the office and its furnishings. But with a cloud-based backup system, your data will be protected from disaster and preserved elsewhere, making it that much easier to recover and get back to work.

Network administration

Keeping the network up and running can be one of the biggest challenges a small business faces, but with managed IT services, the service provider is constantly monitoring your system to identify problems before your users even realize they are occurring. It's not just for network outages, either, but also for slowdowns, for connection hurdles, and even for setting up new network tools like mobility functions and establishing unified communications tools.

THE BENEFITS OF USING MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Knowing what managed IT services can do for small businesses is one thing, but that's just a matter of features. Understanding benefits make the picture even brighter. Here's some of what those who use managed IT services can expect to see:

Peace of mind

This is easily one of the biggest advantages of a managed IT services provider. Not only are you free from the tyranny of "what happens if the network goes down?", but you also have much less to worry about in terms of meeting the demands of federal regulators. Whether you're worried about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

(HIPAA), the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, or just keeping your customers' records safe, turning to managed IT services helps provide the kind of protection you need.

Competitive benefits

Additionally, under "peace of mind" you can also file the competitive benefits of managed IT services. There's much less concern that you're falling behind your competitors because you don't have access to the latest tools. Now, the newest technology is available to you – just as easy as signing up with a provider. Those who fail to do so, after all, leave themselves open to threats from competitors so they have every reason to keep their systems running smoothly.

Systems that just work

Not only do service providers handle the hardware upgrades when they're needed, but they also handle the basic maintenance requirements. Things like patches are especially bothersome for companies; forget one patch, or push it off until later, and systems are left exposed and vulnerable to hackers. Meanwhile, managed service providers have, again, a vested interest in keeping these patches up to date lest business be lost to competitors, so you can remain comparatively secure in the notion that the profit motive is keeping systems patched.

Swinging outside the weight class

Here, when you're talking about competitive benefits, you can also include "swinging outside your weight class." Basically, some tools used to be only available to large corporate entities who had the cash to afford them and the staff to keep them operational. Now, with managed IT services, even the smallest companies can get access to enterprise-level services and have these professionally maintained.

Cut costs

Normally this is first on the list for a lot of organizations, and small businesses are no exception. Cost cutting is an enormous benefit of managed IT services. Not only is there less call for high-end servers and the other materials that would be needed to provide these services internally, but there's also less of a call for higher labor costs to keep them up and running. Managed IT services mean not only cuts to capital expenses but also to operational expenses.

WHAT MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Not all managed IT services for small businesses are created equal. There are some key points that a small business should look for when it comes to choosing the right managed services provider. While not all of these will be vital for every business, looking for a provider that has as many of these as possible will produce the best chance at good results.

Start with an audit

There are those who instinctively recoil at the sound of the word "audit", but in this case, it's good news. A provider that starts with a technology audit is a better choice because that provider gets to know your systems and can forecast potential problems. Those who don't are just hoping your systems work with theirs.

Consider contact methods

See how you can get in touch with a provider and look for all the alternative ways to do so. Don't just accept the phone call; you're doing that under the best possible conditions when there's nothing at stake and your current system is up and running. Look for contacts by social media, by web-based chat tools on a website, or other methods that help ensure they'll be available when you need the help.

Look for an SLA

A service-level agreement (SLA) is one of the best signs of a provider that's worth dealing with. SLAs are codified, legally-binding agreements that detail just how much uptime you can expect. They can include 99.999% availability or can be based on response times. An SLA also commonly spells out terms for what happens if the downtime exceeds that figure, whether it's free services, waived fees, or similar recompense. Those who provide an SLA will have a vested interest in making sure your

service meets those standards for reliability because failure to do so costs the provider directly.

Take on the onboarding process

The onboarding process is the part that gets your business ready to actually put the services to work. It can take around 30 days and includes creating and gathering documentation, producing network diagrams, and other materials required to keep the network up and running. A properly-completed onboarding process prepares the network, as well as the users, to make the most of the new opportunities posed by managed IT services.
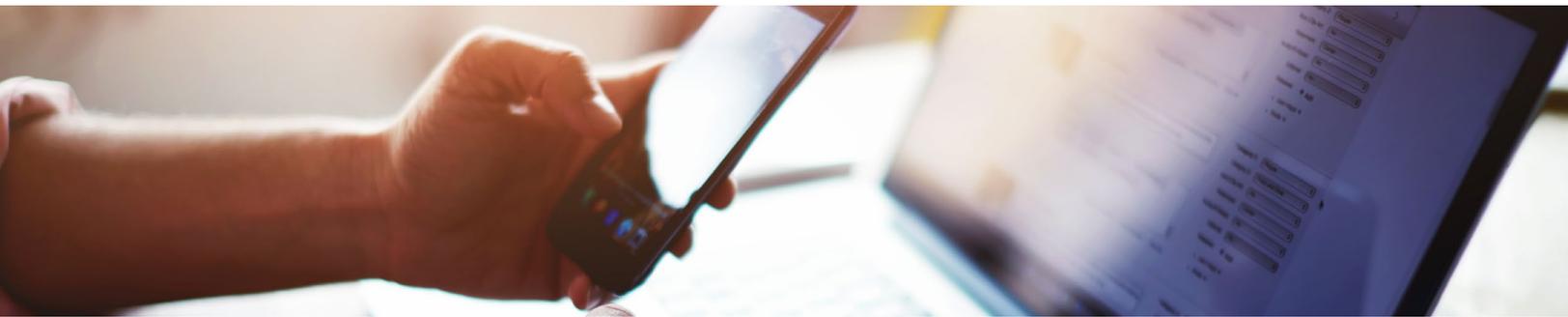
HOW TO GET HELP BRINGING IN MANAGED IT SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

If managed IT services for small businesses sound like a good idea for your organization, your next step is choosing a service provider. Start your search by reaching out to us at Xceptional, where our XceptionalCare service looks to provide a wide range of options for your small business needs. Our desktop as a service (DaaS) options provide the best security while allowing users access to desktop functions and stored data from just about anywhere. Our disaster recovery as a service (DRaaS) options protect your company in the midst of the worst disasters. Drop us a line to get the process started.

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