

For CFO's, CEO's, COO's, Dirs. Of IT, Network Admin.

April 30, 2014

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## Is IT driving your business forward — or are you stuck in reverse?

If you're like most business professionals, you just want technology to work properly, without interruption so you *can take care of your firm's core business needs!* Unfortunately, the "minister of technology" at business enterprises often acts more like a fireman constantly putting out fires as they wrestle with a host of IT issues. Does this sound like you?

### 1. Who do I trust?

Unless you happen to be steeped in IT knowledge and experience, you may not know (or want to!) all the ins and outs of the firm's IT system. You may find yourself wondering: Do we have all the proper components in our system? Is it all current? Are all the components of our IT system compatible with each other so that they work and function properly together? Are we getting the proper consultation for *all* our technology needs? Where do we get professional instruction moving forward?

### 2. Who do I call for trouble shooting?

When one or more users in the firm pulls the disaster alarm because *something* is not working properly, or worse, shuts down altogether, your first thought is probably who do I turn to? Is it a PC issue? Is it our phones? Is it our server? A core application? Our copier? Our Internet access? Do I *really* have to call several different parties at once, only to have them point the finger at each other?

### 3. Is our data secure?

Do we have a source that can ensure that our data is secure in the event of a disaster? Are there any *proactive* steps we can take to minimize the *risks* to our data security?

### 4. Is the cost of IT running amok?

If we don't have an IT budget, should we? Are IT costs out of control, running in peaks and valleys? Are we at risk of needing a major IT overhaul and not being able to afford it?

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## **A New Vision: You're the master of IT**

There are professional IT providers who can manage your entire IT system for you. The solutions and service offerings can include the following:

- ❖ *IT Audit:* The purpose of this process is to create an efficient IT infrastructure. It will document every component connected to the network (PCs, copiers, Internet provider, Core applications) so when problems do arise, your provider can readily identify the root cause for faster solutions.
- ❖ *Single Point of Contact:* The right IT contractor will be able to address all of your IT issues personally, or will facilitate and engage with the proper third parties. For example, if they identify the problem as a copier issue, they will engage with the proper copier technicians to provide a final solution.
- ❖ *Data Security:* This should be addressed in your audit to ensure that you're secure from viruses, Malware, internal and external attacks, and also develop an external backup solution to secure your data in event of disaster.
- ❖ *IT Budget/Plan:* Finally, after everything is documented in the Audit (work stations, servers, software, 3<sup>rd</sup> party products, etc.), you and your provider can develop a multi-year technology plan. The Plan will include services from top to bottom, from the strategic to the mundane:
  - ⊙ Help Desk Network Monitoring and Management
  - ⊙ Offsite backup and recovery services
  - ⊙ Immediate Problem resolution and on-going consulting service
  - ⊙ Scheduled Maintenance upgrades
  - ⊙ Schedules for PC and server upgrades
  - ⊙ Monthly services [Examples: monthly OS patches, security patches, documenting changes, application patching and maintenance]

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When completed, you'll have an IT budget for the next several years that you can plan for, so you will not have any unwelcome expenses.

### **Finding the right professional**

Should you decide to contract with a professional IT provider, here are some guidelines to use in your vetting process.

- ❖ Do they have the ability to do all the planning, organizing, and documenting to provide a multi-year plan?
- ❖ Can they provide all the comprehensive services you require for a flat, fixed rate?
- ❖ Do they have the capability for all IT solutions, including leveraging the cloud, to help manage IT expense?
- ❖ Do they offer a comprehensive security plan that includes best practices methods [SPAM, antivirus, password management, Malware, intrusion prevention etc.] — plus offer an offsite backup location?
- ❖ What level of certifications and accreditations do they hold, i.e.: [SSAE 16 SOC1 Type II audited Data Center environment](#) and [MSP](#)

Finally, outsourcing is an opportunity to bring value to your business and cultivate an additional partner with complementary skill sets and resources. The advantage of outsourcing is that you can receive a wide variety of skill sets and only have to pay for the provider's services as you use them.

#### *About the Author:*

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