



HOW TO CHOOSE

THE RIGHT IT COMPANY

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BUSINESS INFORMATION SOLUTIONS
We Get *IT* Done!

How to Choose the Right IT Company

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21 Questions You Should Ask Your Computer Consultant Before Hiring Them to Support Your Network



Customer Service

1. *Yes* *No* Can they provide a full service program that ALL works together for your company? Or do they leave you dealing with multiple vendors and trying to piece meal a business process together?

Our Answer Our “all-inclusive” support plan is just that – all inclusive. We offer everything from IT managed services and cloud solutions to digital marketing and print management. By getting to know our clients and understanding their business objectives, we can partner with them to deliver RESULTS in every area of their business. All of our solutions are integrated and work well together.

2. *Yes* *No* Do they answer their phones live or do you always have to leave a voicemail and wait for someone to call you back?

Our Answer Yes, we answer our phones live from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and give all clients an emergency after-hours number they may call, even on weekends, if a problem arises. Why? Many CEOs and executives work outside normal business hours and find it to be the most productive time they have. If they cannot access their computer network AND have no support, it can be incredibly frustrating.



3. *Yes* *No* Do they have a written, guaranteed response time to your calls?

Our Answer Yes, we guarantee to have a technician working on your problem, but the response time depends upon your contract.

4. *Yes* *No* ☐ ☐ Do they take the time to explain what they are doing and answer your questions in terms that you can understand (not geek-speak), or do they come across arrogant and make you feel stupid for asking simple questions?

Our Answer Yes, our technicians are trained to have the 'heart of a teacher.' **They will take time to answer your questions and explain everything in a way that you can understand.** Just look at what David Tadlock with Baber-Strunk Enterprises had to say:

"It's been a joy to work with the Business Information Solutions team of IT engineers! It's good to have a wide array of expertise when it comes to IT problems."

5. *Yes* *No* ☐ ☐ Do they consistently (and proactively) offer new ways to improve your network's performance, or do they wait until you have a problem to make recommendations?

Our Answer Yes, **we conduct quarterly review meetings** with our managed services clients to look for new ways to help improve operations, lower costs, increase efficiencies and resolve any problems that may be arising. In conducting these meetings, our goal is to help our clients be more profitable, efficient and competitive.

6. *Yes* *No* ☐ ☐ Do they provide detailed invoices that clearly explain what you are paying for?

Our Answer We never want to keep you guessing! That's why we provide detailed invoices that show you what we did, when we did it and why it needed to be done. Before you receive an invoice, our financial team double-checks it for inaccuracies.



7. *Yes* *No* ☐ ☐ Do they have adequate errors and omissions insurance as well as workers compensation insurance to protect YOU?

Our Answer Yes, **we have both errors and omissions insurance as well as workers compensation.** In this litigious society we live in, you better make sure whomever you hire is adequately insured with both errors and omissions insurance AND workers compensation – and don't be shy about asking to see their latest insurance policies!

True Story

Due to the bad behavior of their technicians, a few years ago Geek Squad was slapped with multi-million dollar lawsuits from their customers. In some cases, their techs were accessing, copying and distributing personal information found on customers' PCs and laptops brought in for repairs. In another case, they lost a client's laptop (and subsequently all the data on it) and tried to cover it up. Bottom line; make sure the company you are hiring has proper insurance to protect YOU.

8. *Yes No* ☐ ☐ Do they guarantee to complete projects on time and on budget?

Our Answer Yes! **All projects are FIXED PRICED and managed by our team of expert technicians.** They will communicate with you so you know exactly where we are on completing the project and how much you are spending. We systematically phase our projects so we don't nickel and dime you and then, never even complete the project.

Maintenance of Your Network

9. *Yes No* ☐ ☐ Do they insist on remotely monitoring your network 24-7-356 to keep critical security settings, virus definitions and security patches up-to-date and PREVENT problems from turning into downtime, viruses, lost data and other issues?

Our Answer Yes, **our remote network monitoring system constantly watches over your network** to look for developing problems, security issues and other complications so we can address them BEFORE they turn into bigger problems.



10. *Yes No* ☐ ☐ Do they provide you with scheduled reports that show all the updates, security patches, and status of every machine on your network so you know for SURE your systems have been secured and updated?

Our Answer Yes, **every month our clients get a detailed report showing an overall health score of their network** and the updates to their antivirus, security settings, patches and other important network checks like hard drive space, backups, speed and performance, etc.



11. *Yes No* ☐ ☐ Do they have other technicians on staff who are familiar with your network in case your regular technician goes on vacation or gets sick?

Our Answer Yes, and since we keep detailed network documentation (basically a blueprint of your computer network) and updates on every client's account, **any of our technicians can pick up where another one has left off.**

12. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐

Is it standard procedure for them to provide you with written, network documentation detailing what software licenses you own, critical passwords, user information, hardware inventory, etc., or are they the only person with the “keys to the kingdom?”

Our Answer We provide access to all YOUR information in a knowledge base available to you at any time. Unlike other IT companies, we give you complete control over your network by allowing key people from your organization to have the necessary information and training to perform certain updates.

Side Note

You should NEVER allow an IT person to have that much control over you and your company. If you get the sneaking suspicion that your current IT person is keeping this under their control as a means of job security, get rid of them (and we can help to make sure you don't suffer ANY ill effects). This is downright unethical and dangerous to your organization, so don't tolerate it!

13. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐

When they offer an “all-inclusive” support plan, is it TRULY all-inclusive, or are their “gotchas” hidden in the fine print?

Some things to consider when choosing an all-inclusive support plan...

1. Is phone/e-mail help desk included, or extra?
2. What about 3rd party software support?
3. What are the costs/consequences of early cancellation?
4. What if you aren't happy with their services? Do they offer a money-back guarantee?
5. Are offsite backups included? Do they make EVERYDAY check-ups to be certain the backups are working?
6. What about onsite support calls? Or support to remote offices?

Our Answer Yes, we offer an “all-inclusive” support plan. One of the most popular service plans offered by consulting firms today is an “all-inclusive” or “all-you-can-eat” managed services plan. These are actually a good thing because they'll save you a lot of money in the long run – HOWEVER, make sure you REALLY understand what is and is not included. Fixed cost on IT support is a great thing, but you have to be sure EVERYTHING is covered. Many “computer gurus” only cover the things that will not break; while the things that are SURE to break, are not covered.

Backups & Disaster Recovery

14. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐

Do they insist on backing up your network BEFORE performing any type of project or upgrade?

Our Answer We certainly do! It's simply a precaution we take just in case there is a hardware failure or software glitch during the upgrade.

15. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ Do they **INSIST** on monitoring an offsite as well as an onsite backup, or are they letting you rely on outdated and dangerous backup methods? Can they tell you how long it will take to be back up and running in the event you have an issue OR they hoping for the best and not preparing for the worst?

Our Answer We do not allow our clients to use inadequate backups because they are incredibly unreliable. Instead, **we make sure all of our clients have a backup solution that will meet their business needs**. Most clients do not fully understand just how much money they may be losing during down times. At BIS, we take the time to gather this information and then, we put a plan in place that meets your business objectives.



16. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ If you were to experience a major disaster, do they have a plan for how your data could be restored **FAST** and/or enable you to work from a remote location?

Our Answer With our technical expertise and industry relationships, we can provide a complete plan to not only secure your data, but **have you up and running immediately after the disaster** using our cloud environment.

Technical Expertise & Support

17. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ On your hardware and software packages do they make you call overseas Help-Desk companies or third party vendors to handle trouble?

Our Answer Yes, **we provide our own in-house help desk** and train our help desk technicians to be friendly and helpful. Not only do we consider this one of the most important aspects of customer service, but we feel it's important in keeping your data safe and secure.



18. *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ Do their technicians participate in on-going training – or are they learning on your dime?

Our Answer All of our technicians, including our top tier III techs, are **required to participate in on-going training** on products that we support.

19. *Yes No*
☐ ☐ Do their technicians arrive on time and dress professionally?

Our Answer BIS technicians are true professionals that you would be proud to have in your office. **They dress professionally, show up on time and are courteous.** If they, for some odd, unforeseen reason, cannot make the appointment, we always notify the client immediately. We believe these are minimum requirements for delivering a professional service.

20. *Yes No*
☐ ☐ Are they familiar with (and can they support) your unique line of business applications?

Our Answer **We support all lines of business applications for our clients.** Although we may not be able to fix faulty software, we will be the liaison between you and your vendor to resolve the problems you are having and make sure these applications work smoothly



21. *Yes No*
☐ ☐ When something goes wrong with your Internet service, phone systems, printers or other IT services, do they own the problem or do they say "that's not our problem to fix?"

Our Answer We feel WE should own the problem for our clients so they don't have to try and resolve any of these issues on their own – that's just good service and something many computer guys won't do. **We have a strict NO FINGER POINTING RULE!**

The 4 Most Costly Misconceptions About Computer Maintenance and Repair

Misconception #1

My computer network doesn't need regular monitoring and maintenance.

This is probably one of the biggest and most costly misconceptions that business owners have. Usually this is because they've been fortunate enough to never encounter a major disaster or they don't recognize the true cost of downtime. This is similar to someone thinking they don't need to wear a seat belt when driving a car because they've never had a life threatening accident.

Computer networks are complex and dynamic systems that need regular updates and maintenance to stay up, running fast and problem free. In fact, it's surprising how fast a brand-new PC will slow down after a few weeks of use without proper updates and maintenance. Here are just a FEW of the critical updates that need to be done on a weekly – if not daily – basis:

- ✓ Monitoring hardware for signs of failure
- ✓ Firewall updates & monitoring
- ✓ Backup monitoring & test restores
- ✓ Spam filter installation & updates
- ✓ Security patches applied – with NEW viruses & hacker attacks cropping up DAILY, this is a CRITICAL part of maintaining your network
- ✓ Monitoring disk space on workstations & servers
- ✓ Antivirus updates & monitoring
- ✓ Spyware detection & removal
- ✓ Optimizing systems for maximum speed

Just like a car, if you don't change the oil, replace the filter, rotate the tires, and perform other regular maintenance, it will eventually break down and cost you FAR MORE to repair than the cost of the basic maintenance – **and cars are far simpler than a computer network!**

If your computer support tech does not insist on some type of regular, automated monitoring or maintenance of your network, then **DO NOT HIRE THEM**. Lack of system maintenance is the NUMBER ONE reason most people end up losing valuable files and incurring heavy computer repair bills. If your technician isn't offering you these services, you need to find someone else to support your computer or network for two reasons:

1. Either they don't know enough to make this recommendation, which is a sure sign they are horribly inexperienced,
2. They recognize that they are profiting from your computer problems and don't want to recommend prevention solutions so they don't lose your service. After all, they'll get paid MORE to remove a virus than to make sure your system is patched, updated and secured (which can be done quickly and inexpensively with good monitoring).

Either reason is a good one to get as far away from that person as possible!

Misconception #2

My nephew/neighbor's kid/brother-in-law/office manager knows this computer stuff and can take care of our computers.



Most people look for a part time “guru” for one reason: to save a few bucks; but this often comes back to haunt them. We frequently get calls from business owners who desperately need our help to get them back up and running or to **clean up a mess that was caused by an inexperienced neighbor, friend, or relative who was just trying to help.**



If the person you have working on your machine does not do computer repair and support for a living, there is a good chance they won't have the knowledge or experience to truly help you – they are a hobbyist at best. **And do you really want a part-time, inexperienced person responsible for handling something as important as your data and computer network?** As with everything in life, you get what you pay for. That's not to say you need to go broke to find a great technician, but you shouldn't be choosing someone on price alone.

Misconception #3

***All computer technicians are created equal.
Your best option will be the one who offers the lowest price.***

As we stated a moment ago, you get what you pay for. **A cheap price usually means a cheap job.** Really good technicians do NOT work cheap because they are in high demand just like every other professional service category. The only technicians that will work cheap are those that are just starting and they are grossly inexperienced or ultimately unreliable.

And some shops will hire college kids or newbie technicians because they will work for next to nothing to gain experience, OR they allow interns to support your network because they **don't have to pay them at all** – but what you don't realize is that an inexperienced technician like this can end up costing more because:



- 1** They improperly diagnose problems, which means you're paying them to fix the **WRONG** without a resolution.
Case in point: A few years ago a TV reporter went undercover to 8 computer repair shops in LA with a perfectly working PC with a disconnected cable in the back (a fix that the **AVERAGE** computer tech would have caught in minutes with a visual inspection). Several shops improperly diagnosed the problem and wanted to charge them anywhere from \$59 to over \$275 to fix it!

2 They could take 3 to 5 times as long to do the same repair an experienced technician could fix quickly. Again, you're paying for those extra hours and worst of all keeping you and your staff from producing.



3

They could do MORE damage, costing you more money and downtime.

With your client data, accounting records, e-mail and other critical information at stake, do you REALLY want the lowest-priced shop working on your machine?

We believe most people want value for money and simply want the job done right. You will find that we are not the cheapest, but we don't apologize for that. **As the owner, I decided a long time ago that I would rather explain our higher rates ONE TIME than to make excuses for POOR SERVICE forever.** That said, we're not the most expensive either. We simply feel that we should offer a good service at a fair price. That's why we have been able to stay in business for over 13 years and have served thousands of customers.

Misconception #4

An honest computer support company should be able to give a quote over the phone.

I wish this were true, but it isn't. **Just like a good doctor, an honest and professional technician will need to diagnose your network before they can quote any price over the phone;** consider the example above where all that was needed was a simple cable being plugged in. If someone brought that to us, we would just plug it back in and not charge them; but without SEEING the machine, we could have never diagnosed that over the phone. Try calling your dentist and tell them you want a price on getting the perfect smile!

Also, some consultants will quote you a cheap rate over the phone to get in the door, but then jack up the prices once they get in your office by taking 3 times as long, selling you add-ons and up-sells, etc.



4 More Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Computer Consultant

Mistake #1



Choosing a computer consultant based on a single phone call

This is probably **one of the biggest and most costly misconceptions** that business owners have. Usually this is because they've been fortunate enough to never encounter a major disaster or they don't recognize the true cost of downtime. This is similar to someone thinking they don't need to wear a seat belt when driving a car because they've never had a life threatening accident.

Mistake #2



Choosing a computer consultant that doesn't have a written money-back guarantee

In our view, a good consulting firm should be accountable for their services and fixing things **RIGHT**. If you aren't pleased with a job that was done, they should (at a minimum) make it right for free; and if they simply cannot resolve an issue to **YOUR** satisfaction, you shouldn't get stuck with the bill.

Plus, the fact that they stand behind their work with a money-back guarantee shows they have confidence in themselves to make you a happy client. And don't fall for the, "We don't offer one because people will take advantage of us," routine. In our experience, **MOST** people just want an honest service at a reasonable price. If you give them that, they are happy to pay. Are there a few

unethical folks out there? Of course, but they are the minority, and we would rather bite the bullet on the very few dishonest folks so we can gain the trust and confidence of the majority of clients who just want their problems fixed fast and fixed right.

Mistake #3



Choosing a computer consultant without speaking to several of their current clients

Check their references! Don't just take the sales guy's word that they are good – ask to speak to at least 3 or 4 clients that are similar in size and scope to you. If they hesitate or cannot provide you with references, don't trust them!

Another good sign is that they should have **multiple client testimonials and success stories** posted on their web site and throughout their marketing collateral. A lack of this may be a sign that they don't HAVE clients who are happy

Mistake #4



Choosing a computer consultant who cannot remotely monitor, update & support your network

In this day and age, a computer consultant who doesn't do this is living in the stone ages. You want someone to do this because it will dramatically increase your network's security and will enable them to do faster repairs. That's not to say they shouldn't come onsite; but **remote monitoring and repairs make fixing problems FASTER for YOU and help AVOID problems** from cropping up in the first place.



Thank you for taking the time to read this educational guide. I hope it was both informative and helpful in learning more about choosing an IT company.

I look forward to hearing your feedback!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me at 251-747-2959 or shoot me an email at plong@askbis.com.

Thanks,
Phillip Long

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P Long'.