

Considering an MSP? Ask These 5 Tough Questions

Cut Through the Fluff to
Find a Proactive IT Partner

You won't have trouble finding a managed service provider (MSP). In South Florida alone hundreds are available.

But finding a proactive MSP to help you conquer your IT goals? That's not always easy. While you don't need X-ray vision to spot a strong MSP, you do need to ask the right questions.

Before you hire an MSP, ask these five questions to cut through the fluff and find the right partner.



1. How Will You Keep My IT Costs Predictable?

The right MSP offers clear, predictable pricing and helps you budget for IT as your business grows and changes.

The MSP should talk about:

- A customized IT cost projection based on the age and performance of your equipment, your business goals, and your future IT needs.
- A fixed monthly rate. Pay-by-the-hour or project-based IT support not only leads to unpredictable monthly costs, it encourages unreliable IT. The more your IT fails, the more your MSP gets paid.
- What you get for your money. MSPs handle four interdependent IT categories: strategy, maintenance, support, and security. If your MSP doesn't manage all of those areas, they'll be less effective at handling the others.

 **Red Flag:** Giving you a price quote without asking specifics about your business, goals, and tech stack.



2. What Type of Ticketing System Do You Offer?

MSPs with a clear system for managing support tickets provide faster response times and better solutions.

The MSP should talk about:

- Using technology to streamline and automate support operations so you get clear and consistent support.
- The presence of people in the ticketing process. A person should triage tickets so that critical issues are handled first.
- Process for communicating progress on tickets. You shouldn't have to call and ask about the status.

 **Red Flag:** Providing answers such as "Call us," "We'll send someone out," or "You have a dedicated support specialist who handles your account." If you hear these answers, expect to call over and over again about the same problems.



3. What Are Your Credentials?

You're giving your MSP access to your network, hardware, data, and systems – everything your business relies on to function. No licensing or credentials are required to advertise as an MSP, but a lot of expertise is needed to do the job well.

The MSP should talk about:

- Cloud, operating system, and security certifications that match what your business uses. For example, if you operate in a Microsoft environment, choose an MSP with Microsoft certifications.
- Continuing education opportunities and training requirements for all IT staff.
- Thought leadership, such as speaking, writing, or teaching on IT topics.

🚩 **Red Flag:** Claiming experience is the same as continuing education and certifications. A learn-as-you-go MSP will learn as they go on your dime.

4. What Impacts Do You Have on Your Customers' Businesses?

It's your MSP's job to keep your tech stack running at peak performance and recommend new technologies that improve efficiency. Ask them to measure their value in tangible benefits.

The MSP should talk about:

- A reduction in support tickets. Proactive MSPs don't just offer speedy support, they reduce IT disruptions for your team.
- Specific efficiency improvements to a customer's tech stack. This shows the MSP understands what's important, makes strategic recommendations, implements the changes, and monitors performance.
- How they evaluate customers' IT environments and improve reliability, mobility, and automation.

🚩 **Red Flag:** Giving a laundry list of IT work they provide. This is a sign the MSP isn't focused on what truly matters – ensuring fewer disruptions and greater productivity so your team can focus on running the business.



5. How Do You Keep Up With Evolving Security Best Practices?

Concerns over cybersecurity is the number one reason small businesses switch MSPs. New technologies create more opportunities for cybercriminals and present constant security challenges.

The MSP should talk about:

- Their protocols for integrating security best practices into your IT environment, from strong passwords to penetration testing.
- How they keep up with changing compliance standards and their process for ensuring your security aligns.
- Clear examples of how customer data is backed up, stored, and protected.

Red Flag: Lacking a specific plan for staying educated on new security threats and talking more about disaster recovery or fixes than proactive measures.

Don't settle for any provider when you're seeking an MSP. Asking tough questions and knowing what to listen for will help you find a proactive MSP that truly partners with your business.



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