Optimize Your MSP Toolbox
A mechanic doesn’t want to lug an overloaded toolbox from job to job. Likewise, your balance sheet shouldn’t carry unnecessary expenses month over month.

A common practice should be routine evaluation of what’s in your MSP toolbox, taking a critical eye when paring down inessential tools. Not sure where to start?

*Keep reading.*
Tech Stack

Keep it or leave it?

Without the right tech stack, the MSP wheels stop turning. You can divide the tools in your stack into two categories: those that are mission critical, and the nice-to-haves. Look at each solution or platform your MSP uses, and consider the scenario of your MSP operating with that piece missing.

- Will your MSP still be able to deliver its services without it?
- Will it cripple your team and cause friction in your workflows?
- Will it open up a vulnerability — security, disaster recovery or some other area of risk?
- How will this impact operating expenses in the short and long term?

No two are made alike.

Before you locked in your current tools, there was probably an evaluation process you went through. While this is an important step towards choosing the best solution for your MSP, the real evaluation comes when you’ve fully integrated the tool into your workflows. Ask yourself:

- Have the tools delivered on their promise?
- Is the interface and functionality designed for service delivery?
- Are they reliable and do they have an ongoing development cycle?
- Is there untapped value in the tool?
**Playing well together.**

While it’s natural to piece together individual tools and solutions to create a bespoke tech stack to meet your unique needs, sometimes the individual elements don’t play nicely together. In order to eliminate workflow friction, there needs to be at least some level of integration between your tools. The deeper the integration, the more time you’ll save, the better your service delivery, and the happier your team.

Here’s the thing, when you purchase tools from competing vendors, there’s less of a chance for deep integration. While some vendors commit to maintaining an open platform and champion the integration between vendor products, others do not.

Playing well together doesn’t just mean having deep workflow integrations. Not all tools are created equally, meaning the features and how well they perform is the other side of the equation.

Identify the features that will benefit your MSP the most, such as security, workflow automation, and access to information, and onboard tools that deliver these features better than the rest.
Capital

We’ve all heard the saying “capital is king” and, yes, it should also be viewed as a tool in your MSP toolbox. It allows you to pay ongoing operating expenses, and invest and grow your business.

Identify your cash resources.

Do you have healthy cash flows that not only keep you afloat but also can be used to invest? Do you have relationships with financial institutions that can help you secure financing for significant capital expenditures with a long-term ROI? Have you considered bringing on a business partner that can buy into the business and support its growth?

Minimize in order to maximize.

When you’ve taken a critical look at your people and tech stack, there’s a chance you’ll have identified areas where expenses can be eliminated, or at the very least, reduce. Reducing expenses isn’t a sustainable method for growing revenue, but it’s an important exercise for achieving a lean company.

When reassessing the tools in your tech stack, keep an eye out for bundle pricing for purchasing a suite of tools.
Industry Resources

Webinars
They’re a great source for diverse content and available to view from the comfort of your own home or office. Yes, they often entail a pitch at the end, but that doesn’t discredit the quality of information imparted.

Groups and Forums
If you’re part of an industry group or forum, you’ll get straightforward, honest information from people with boots on the ground. That said, be wary of forums where users flood message boards with astroturf comments.

Training
You’re never too old to learn. Enrolling in training programs for certifications keep your skill set up to date, and gives credibility to you and your MSP. Identify training programs that are respected and recognized within the industry.

Conferences
Yes, they can be expensive to go to, but they offer great value if you choose the right ones. Not only are you exposed to thought leadership and deeper insights you likely wouldn’t find in an hour-long webinar, you’re also immersed within an industry-relevant social setting. You’ll build your knowledge base, and your network.

Articles
The media provides information that is often valuable and relevant within the context of current events. However, there isn’t the same level of candor found within industry groups or forums. Media outlets are sensitive to the legal and relational ramifications from saying anything negative or controversial about heavy hitters in the channel, and this influences a media outlet’s content.
People

It’s strange and impersonal to think of your employees as “tools”, but let’s face it, they’re arguably the most important asset in your business, not to mention the most expensive.

Look at your top performers.

What’s the “it” factor they have that sets them above the others? Would having more people on your team like them mean you could function at the same level or better with fewer team members? To get a team of all stars, hire for skills and culture fit, and give employees the supplementary training needed to hit the ground running.

Build your best team.

You probably have team members that don’t perform at the same level as others, but let’s face it, they’re already onboarded and letting them go isn’t as easy as saying “you’re fired”. Make sure to understand the difference between a mediocre performer and deadweight. The former is someone who displays potential to do better, and therefore it makes sense to give them special attention, grooming them for success. Deadweight can’t be helped, and the sooner you part ways, the sooner you can optimize the people part of your toolbox.
Culture

You can’t hold it in your hands, but it’s there nonetheless. Company culture is an intangible tool that fosters team cohesion, and encourages team members to give it their all.

Are your company core values defined and known?
Is there a culture of customer-focused service?
Does it feel like everyone is pulling in the same direction?

Have you heard the saying, ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast’? It has been proven to be true, time and time again. Developing and nurturing the healthy of your corporate culture is one of the most critical elements for optimizing your toolbox.
Tying it all Together

When designing your optimal stack, one thing to take into consideration is the idea of having all of your mission critical information in one place. That means a centralized, structured documentation system, preferably one with enterprise-grade security.

Integrations with all of your other key tools are important, but some integrations are merely cosmetic, while others are deep workflow integrations. Look for the latter, as those will save your team incredible amounts of time. If you’re saving your team time, that will help them establish the right culture.

IT Glue is the most advanced IT documentation system on the market. With deep workflow integrations, and all your mission critical information under one roof, IT Glue is the one tool that brings all the elements of your toolbox together, no matter what RMM or PSA you’re using.
Having smart, structured documentation at the core of your MSP toolbox can elevate your operational efficiency faster and further than any other tool.

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